
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – Get to Know the ICANN Community: CSG/BC and GAC
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SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Hello and welcome back to the session where we are going to learn about business constituency and the government advisory committee. My name is Siranush Vardanyan and I am a participation manager for this session.

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And now I would like to introduce you the speakers for this session, which we will start first from business constituency, who are -- you have heard from GNSO, Generic Name Supporting Organization, and they are part of non-contracted party house.

So, the chair of business constituency, Mason, is here. And the member of council, GNSO council from business constituency, Vivek, is here.

So, without further ado, let me give the floor to them to introduce us what is business constituency doing and how important are they within the ICANN community and how we can be part and be engaged in that community. The floor is yours.

MASON COLE

Thank you, Siranush. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Mason Cole. I'm chair of the Business Constituency and it's a pleasure to be with you here today. This is, I think, I don't know, Vivek, the third or fourth time that we've done this, and it's always good to engage with the fellows and newcomers.

I normally have an introduction to the BC that I provide, but since we're in Vivek's country and we're in his hometown, I yield the floor to Vivek for a bit of an opening on what the BC does and who we represent, and then I'll follow up. Vivek?

VIVEK GOYAL

Thank you, Mason. And to everybody present here a big namaste. Welcome to India and welcome to Mumbai, the financial capital of India and also the home of Bollywood. So, all those fans there, give me a yoo-hoo. Okay, fantastic.

So today, the BC is being represented here by Mason Cole, who is the chair of the BC. We also have members sitting at the back. We have Segun who heads our policy work. We have Zak who is a very active member of the BC and we have Marie who leads our charter with the CSG. So, big thanks to everybody for showing up here to tell you guys about the BC.

Now, we have 30 minutes here. I will not be speaking for 30 minutes. I will do a brief introduction and then start asking you questions. So please, I hope everybody is ready.

And if there's anyone who is a fellow or an NextGen-ner and is not sitting at the table at the back, I would request you to please come and sit at the table. Is there anybody at the back? Otherwise, you'll be asked the first question. Okay, fantastic.

So, BC stands for Business Constituency. As you all have gone through the ICANN structure, the Business Constituency represents the interest of businesses across the world. Whether you are a business of one person, an entrepreneur, or you are a business as big as Microsoft, Tata, Google, you can and many of them are members of the Business Constituency.

Any domain name policy that impacts the business user is a concern of the Business Constituency. We have been very active members in all ICANN policy making process and are strengthening our team every day so that we can put the best foot forward and represent the businesses that are our members.

Currently, DNS abuse is on the top of our chart because it impacts the customers of the businesses and directly impacts the businesses. So, domain name abuse is our key priority, and we have been forefront at driving this policymaking and bringing the first PDP to the fore.

We are represented by members from across the world. Mason, how many members do we have, roughly?

MASON COLE

About 80.

VIVEK GOYAL

About 80 members, and we have members from all over the world, right from US to Japan, New Zealand, everywhere. So, if you're a member of the BC, you're maybe two connections away from any company in the world, irrespective of where it is. I'm done, Mason. Do you have anything else before I start the question-answer round?

MASON COLE

No. Thank you. That was very good, Vivek. Just to add a couple of things to what Vivek said because he represented the BC extremely well, the BC's job is to take issues that are important to businesses and their customers into the ICANN realm and advocate for those positions in policymaking.

The BC is one of the original constituencies of the GNSO. I've been participating in ICANN for 25 years and the BC was there when I started. So, it's one of the oldest, one of the most active, hopefully a respected constituency. And as Vivek said, we're made up of companies that are one-person entrepreneur shops in maybe a developing economy, to a Fortune 50 company in the U.S. or Europe or really anywhere.

So, our job, as I mentioned, is to advocate for businesses and their customers. DNS abuse is very much at the front of what we pay attention to because of its impact on businesses and their customers. We also pay attention to other things. We're concerned about, you may have heard of the RDRS system, we're active on that front. We're active on who is policy. We're active on any number of things that Zak Muscovich, who's with us today, was very, very involved in domain name transfer policy.

So, anything that touches business involvement on the internet or in the DNS is where the BC wants to be involved. We're very ably represented by Vivek on the council along with Lawrence Olawale-Roberts who's not in the room at the moment, but I hope you get a chance to meet Lawrence.

And I think we should probably wrap it up there, Vivek, and take some questions. So, we're very happy to hear from each of you with your questions about the BC or your thoughts or anything else that may come to mind.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Yes, we can now open the floor for the questions. And you want to? Okay, Asteway, please go ahead.

ASTEWAY NEGASH

Thank you, Siranush, and the presenters, Mason and Vivek. Thank you for the introduction. My name is Asteway Negash. I'm a member of the BC myself. I have been a member for about three years, two and a half maybe, since June 2024, actually. And I'm happy to be part of the BC, mostly because I'm a business owner myself.

It actually made sense to be part of the BC as a business owner, first of all. And second to that, I also operate as a software development company in my hometown in Addis, Ethiopia and we operate within the B2B ecosystem.

We have a lot of customers that we do a lot of B2B marketing for. We also develop software to our clients. So, the policy that we actually make within the BC actually helps, not only myself as a member of the BC, but also the larger business community within my business ecosystem, within Africa and Ethiopia.

So, this is to say kudos to you, Vivek and Mason. And I say, well introduction of the BC, that really helps the fellows to, you know, look their way towards joining the BC. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And actually, Vivek is coming from the fellowship program so he's a fellow, like long time with me, probably the same period and he is long-standing member of BC now. And we have really a lot of fellows who joined BC and Asteway is also part of their membership.

And just a question to make it clear for everyone, if you can talk about this, membership to BC is paid membership, so it's not free membership. But if you can talk about this, how like small companies can become part of BC and how it works.

VIVEK GOYAL

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you, Siranush and thank you Asteway. We are very glad to have you with us and for all the audience this question was not planned. We did not ask Asteway to say good things about us.

Membership to the BC is in different levels. It's tiered. It's so that even small companies and companies in different parts of the world can participate without worrying about the burden of the membership fees.

So, if you're a small company, the fees is much lower for you. If you're a larger company, the fees is a little bit higher for you. So,

we never let the fees be a reason for somebody not being able to join the BC.

If you are interested in joining the BC, please reach out to us. We'll be more than happy to tell you the fee structure and also help you become a member, right?

MASON COLE

In fact, I failed to mention this before, forgive me, but if you're interested in more information about the BC, we have our own website, icanbc.org, and I believe that our membership structure is detailed there.

So, you can see a list of all of our members. You can see a comprehensive list of our policy positions. You can see about our officers. You can see about pretty much anything you need to know about the BC. So, I encourage you to take a look at our website. Siranush?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Yes. Rohan, please go ahead.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Thank you, Vivek and Mason. I'm Rohan Sachdeva from the AU domain administration, but right now speaking in my personal capacity, I work with a lot of businesses as registrars. And I want to understand like different countries and bodies have their own

regulation on how they operate with registrars. Like, oh, you need to abide by this.

So, what's the stance of big businesses, for example, like GoDaddy, when they operate in these different countries, what's your stance on, should there be a uniform policy all across? And when you come to forums like ICANN, what do you push for? Should there be uniformity in like all the countries? What's like the policy and regulation challenges that you face? Thank you.

VIVEK GOYAL

So, GoDaddy is a registrar and so they will go into contracted party house and the registrar stakeholder group, not to the BC. But the policies made at ICANN are uniformly applied to every registrar and registry in the world. Irrespective of where you are, you have to abide by the policies of ICANN.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Okay, so just to understand very clearly, so Business Constituency has businesses that can be of any shape and size, like not necessarily registrar businesses?

VIVEK GOYAL

No. Anybody other than registrar and registry business can be part of the BC. They just have to be for-profit.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Okay.

VIVEK GOYAL

Yeah.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Excellent, and thank you for posting the website, icannbc.org. So, if you need to learn more, this is the link to the website to go. Yes, please, go ahead.

SRIJAN RAI

Hi, my name is Srijan. I'm a NextGen. I was just curious about whether there are conversations in BC right now about AI and web scraping overall, and how is it affecting businesses?

And I think another challenge related to that would be in like DNS abuse in the context of having multiple like, say, impersonator websites to brands, so I just wanted to understand how is the conversation shaping up?

And is web scraping and say, you know, businesses not having their data scraped also one of the concerns that is being raised at the BC? Yeah.

VIVEK GOYAL I'm going to ask you a question now because I'm sure everybody was paying attention. Is content on a website part of ICANN's remit?

SRIJAN RAI No.

VIVEK GOYAL Exactly. So, is this web scraping part of ICANN's remit?

SRIJAN RAI I'm not sure.

VIVEK GOYAL It's not, right? But we are definitely having discussions about it because in a way it does impact businesses. Data is very precious to businesses and using it illegally is not right for businesses.

And AI is being actively used to increase larger and larger attacks on businesses by creating phishing packages. People are selling phishing as a service now which are impacting businesses and all of this goes back to the DNS abuse discussion that I mentioned earlier.

DNS abuse is very key for Business Constituency and we are just launching the first DNS abuse PDP focusing on associated domain check. So, if you register one domain and, you know, if you report one domain that you believe is malicious, the registrar will look at

other domains which might be associated with that to check if they are also malicious and then take action.

So, all of this goes back to, what is under ICANN's remit and how does it relate to domain name? And if it does, then it is under ICANN's remit and DNS abuse will take action on it.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Okay. Thank you.

MASON COLE

Let me add to that, if I may. Yes, AI is not -- well, we'll find out more this week about how much AI is on the radar of ICANN. I think the SSAC is having an AI workshop later today, but Vivek is correct. The advent of AI and its application to the issues that we care about as businesses is significant.

One thing that we're very concerned about on DNS abuse is that threat vectors in the abuse environment are accelerating faster than ICANN's capability to deal with it and AI is only going to make that worse.

So, we're very concerned about that and hopefully we're going to get smarter than we are right now about AI and learn more about how ICANN can apply itself to that environment. You had another question and I'm not sure we addressed it. It had to do with impersonating websites, I believe? Right. I'm sorry?

ASTEWAY NEGASH

Thank you. Thank you, Mason.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Let Mason say and then we'll go right.

MASON COLE

Oh, okay. So, that's another issue that we're very concerned about. Businesses and organizations are very often impersonated online, either at the domain name level or at the content level.

And at the domain name level is where we're most active. It's a form of DNS abuse and we're very concerned about that because the businesses we represent, for example, Meta is a member of our constituency, facebooklogin.com and instagramsecurity.com and all these websites that try to impersonate those platforms or businesses like them with the intent to defraud those companies and their customers is a big concern of ours. And that's definitely on the map for us in terms of a form of DNS abuse that we want to do something about.

ASTEWAY NEGASH

Thank you for the question. I was willing to add to what Mason has said as an answer to your question. I didn't get your name, but you can tell me.

SRIJAN RAI

It's Srijan.

ASTEWAY NEGASH

Srijan. Yeah, I wanted to respond to your question about web scrapping. Basically, I think you are in the business of search engine building, scrapping data out of websites. So, this is a web crawling operation kind of business.

So, I think the BC is definitely where you belong if you want to interact in policymaking in the industry of web scrapping or search engine building. Because any community within ICANN, other than registrars and registrars, is called a business user. And if you're in the business of web scrapping or web crawling, then you can definitely participate within the BC and the BC is your place. Thanks.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you Asteway. Idil, please go ahead.

İDİL KULA

It's not open. Yes. Hello, it is Idil from Turkey. I am a returning fellow and I'm an IT lawyer, but I would like to ask on behalf of the planet like since you are in the Business Constituency and there's a growing and emerging trends on impact business, impact like impact in environments, ecology, and planets.

So, impact entrepreneurship investments like these are the new entrepreneurs and SMEs who are prioritizing, not only profits, but also the profitization, like profit on behalf of planets. Like they also

claim responsibility of their carbon emissions and they are solving the problems of our planet.

So, I am coming from that background and my question is, how is the discussion and representation of impact business in the Business Constituency? Like do you have impacts entrepreneurs, like climate entrepreneurs, green entrepreneurs who are involving with pollution problems, foods, or water crisis?

It is very important because if you have some kind of representation I would love to be included in the impact business part of your constituency. Thank you.

VIVEK GOYAL

I'm going to take a stab at it and then Mason and Asteway and all the BC members can join in because it's a tough question. If any of these businesses who are trying to solve the world pollution problem or to safeguard our natural environment, they need a domain name, we will champion that. Anything to do with domain name, we will help champion them.

A lot of our businesses that are members of our constituency do work on safeguarding the environment, and they have their own processes. But we focus on making sure that those businesses and their customers, employees, are able to access internet without any challenge.

I'm not sure if I'm able to answer your question because environmental impact of the business and what they are doing on

it is not really on our radar. We are about domain names, domain name policy.

İDİL KULA

I would like to explain more. I'm not speaking about the environmental impact, but I would love to be represented as impact entrepreneurs in your Business Constituency. And I know that your role is mainly on domain names, like, of course, this is ICANN and it's for all infrastructure, but it is important if it is an infrastructure-based organization.

Maybe, for example, like you can support the climate and impact businesses, small businesses. And this is not an ordinary ESG, like the impact business is not ESG practice or greenwashing. Like they have some sets of measurable indicators so that's the point actually.

VIVEK GOYAL

Okay. So, impact businesses and organization?

İDİL KULA

No.

VIVEK GOYAL

No? Okay. I'm sorry, missing --

İDİL KULA

Like impact for planets, like -- yeah. Yeah, of course, ecology, ecology, actually.

MASON COLE

Well, thank you for the question. I think Vivek got the answer 95% of the way there. And that is that we would welcome any business into the BC who has an interest in governance of the domain name system in a productive way that would benefit businesses of whatever kind, impact businesses or others, that have an interest in DNS outcomes.

So, ICANN operates its remit very narrowly, and they're concerned about the domain name system, its stability and security, and really not very much else. Now, ICANN has taken steps to reduce its own environmental impact, which, of course, we welcome, and everyone should, but the BC doesn't take a position on issues that are outside the remit of ICANN itself.

So, our role, as Vivek said, is to advocate for businesses inside the ICANN environment in a way that benefits them and help the DNS structure protect businesses and their customers' interests. That's mainly what we focus on. I hope that helps. Okay.

SEGUNFUNMI OLAJIDE

All right. Segunfunmi Olajide, Vice Chair, Policy, the Business Constituency. Just to add up to what the Chair and our Counselor said to you, one of the perspectives or one of the lenses you should see the Business Constituency from is that, we represent the

interest of commercial businesses that relies on the internet for doing business.

What that translates to is, we are not trying to interfere with your operations, but we just want to protect your interest as regards to the use of domain names and the internet for accessibility so that for no reason you are blocked out from using the internet.

So, your operations, beautiful, that's your in-house thing, but the BC represents your interest in such a way that whatever policy is set around, domain names does not in any way affect businesses and then innovations is encouraged at all levels. I hope that helps.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you very much. I have one online participant, Sazan. If you would like to unmute yourself and still interested to ask question, please go ahead.

SAZAN

Hello, I am Sazan.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Oh, okay.

SAZAN

I am from Docify. I have a question about the BC. Would you explain which type of company should join and become a member

of BC and how those companies benefit from the participatory on BC?

VIVEK GOYAL

Any company that relies on, like what Sazan just said, any commercial business that relies on the internet to conduct their business can join the BC. And how will they benefit by joining the BC? They can be part of the conversation that shapes their access to the internet.

So, if you're relying on the internet to do your business, and you're not able to access the internet for some reason because of domain name issues, it directly impacts your business. So if you would like to be a member who helps shape the policies to make sure the internet is open, accessible to every business out there, then please join the BC and we'll make it happen together.

SAZAN

So, it's also about a trademark or something else?

MASON COLE

Trademark issues are generally dealt with by the intellectual property constituency. So, I think that was your question, was how are trademarks dealt with inside of ICANN? Is that right?

SAZAN

Yes.

MASON COLE

Okay. So, if you're a trademark holder or you advocate for trademark holders, your place in ICANN generally is with the IPC, the Intellectual Property Constituency.

As Vivek said, if you're a business or a commercial operator and you, for example, are victimized by DNS abuse like a phishing attack or a malware or something of that nature, the BC is in there advocating for solutions to those kinds of problems. So your benefit of joining the BC as a business is you have an entire group of people who participate in ICANN advocating for positions that are beneficial to you and your business.

SAZAN

Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Khaoula, please.

KHAOULA ELHABYB

Hello, everyone. Thank you for the introduction. My name is Khaoula Elhabyb. I'm from Morocco. I'm a first-time fellow. So, I come from an academic background. So my question is about, I'm interested actually in understanding how the academic studies of data-driven analysis can inform the BC perspectives on policy discussion. And also, do you include some new technologies in the process of PDP? So, that's it. Thank you.

VIVEK GOYAL

Did you say new technologies in PDP? Okay. Yes, that's the correct answer. We do. Like I said, we work with businesses and many of them are at the forefront of creation of new technology. And we within the BC always embrace to see new technologies, new processes, new ways to improve what we do.

PDP is actually governed by a separate set of rules and regulations which are managed by the GNSO council. BC independently cannot change or impact those, but we do try our level best to help PDP's policy making be more data driven and be measurable so that we can see if we are doing better or we just think we are doing better. So absolutely.

And anything you can do to help us, do anything we are doing better or do something new that will help the processes is more than welcome irrespective of if you come from an academic background, commercial background. If you have views, thoughts, ideas that can help us do our job better, we are more than welcome to listen to you and give you time at the BC meetings.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

There is a question in the Zoom. In the area of DNS abuse, what is BC doing to mitigate something like cyber fraud, deepfake?

MASON COLE

Thank you, Siranush, for the question. I have three answers in my head going at the same time and you know I can't handle that. So,

yes, the BC is very active on DNS abuse, extremely active. ICANN has a narrowly defined definition of what DNS abuse is. They say that it's malware, spam, phishing, pharming, and what did I just say? Yeah, and botnets, thank you. Yep.

So, we've been active on handling policy making around those types of abuse now for probably the last three or four years. Deepfakes, spear phishing, impersonation, corporate impersonation of websites, all the issues that were raised in that question are different kinds of DNS abuse, but they're yet to be defined by ICANN formally.

So, one of the things the BC has tried to do for some time now is revisit the definition of DNS abuse on a periodic basis, to anticipate abuse as it's created out in the world and can be brought into the ICANN environment to deal with. So I admit that we're sometimes frustrated by the fact that there are new forms of abuse out there that ICANN doesn't seem to do anything about yet, but that's part of what we're doing.

We're advocating for the capability of ICANN to widen its focus, look at new and emerging trends in abuse, revisit the definition often, and work with the SSAC and the GAC and the contracted parties. And everyone in the environment to anticipate new forms of abuse and do something productive about them. We're very concerned that abuse is developing faster than ICANN's ability to deal with it and that's a big concern of ours. And it's something that we're going to raise here all week while we're here in India.

So that was a very long-winded answer to the question about deepfakes and I apologize for that, but we're just as worried about deepfakes as we are about phishing. So, we're hoping that through some of the advocacy that we've been doing, we have an opportunity to widen ICANN's attention on different forms of abuse.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you. Lady over there, please.

JOYSA KAUSHIK

Hi, my name is Joysa Kaushik for the record. So, you touched upon the associated domains where like if one domain is malicious, so all the associated domains will be taken down as well. So let's take a scenario where there is like company A or abc.com, for example, and there is a competitor of this company which creates an associated domain, like intentionally, which is malicious just to affect the business of the initial company. So, how do you deal with such situations?

VIVEK GOYAL

Good question. Thank you. The definition of associated domain may be different than what you understand. What you're talking about is similar domain or it uses the A, B, C word in the domain name, that is not the definition of associated domain as is used in this work that we are going on.

It means, for example, I create one domain. I actually create 30 domains under my account and one of them is identified as malicious and reported to the registrar. Then the registrar will have the obligation to check all the 30 domains and if all of them are found to be malicious, then we'll take it down. Before this policy, work was starting, they only were supposed to take down the one domain that is reported. That is the definition of associated domain in this aspect.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you and we probably will take the last question. Bernhart, please.

BERNHART FARRAS SUKANDAR

Hello. Good afternoon. I'm Bernhart Farras from Indonesia, NextGen. So, I would like to discuss about the economic sustainability of the namespace. So, I'm coming from a person who's doing business helping small, medium enterprises, mostly not even small, it's micro, and their concern is, of course, capital, right? And to register to a domain, it needs money.

So like, I see that ICANN is really pushing the new gTLD programs, but what is your stance and what is your current initiatives to advise that? I mean, like, how could we -- in my perspective, it's already hard. Like the entry to the barrier for the micro enterprises is already really hard to even own one domain. But now with the

all new gTLDs, they have to like maybe own two or three or four if it's needed to protect their brand name. Right?

And then other than that, in my thinking, there is a structural accountability as well. I mean, like the small business or even a big business, they have to bear the risk. I mean, like even they bear the risk, but what is the stance of business association or business owners when it comes to the structural power in ICANN policy outcomes? Thank you.

VIVEK GOYAL

I'll take the first one, the easy one, and pass the difficult one to Mason, the second part. I'll answer the first one.

See, you are making, there is an assumption in your question that if new gTLDs come, businesses will have to register more domains to safeguard themselves and it will cost more money when just registering one cost money. The assumption there is that if they do not register other domains, it will cause abuse on their brand and that is what we are trying to solve with DNS abuse.

If we and the ICANN do the job with DNS policymaking well, then businesses will not need to register multiple domains to protect themselves because the policies will protect them and they will only have to register domains that they need and want to use. Right? But what you are saying is absolutely true.

Today, I mean, I help businesses decide what domains to register and they need to register hundreds and hundreds just to protect

themselves. But again, if we at the BC and at an ICANN level do our job well, then DNS abuse will be tackled at a large extent and businesses will not need to resort to those things to register domains just to protect themselves. I'll give the hard one to Mason.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And the last question. Yeah, Mason, go on ahead.

MASON COLE

Would you mind just repeating the gist of your question again?

BERNHART FARRAS SUKANDAR

Yeah, I mean, like they have to bear the risk as well, right, to protect their domain, to ensure the security, to make sure that the users or their visitors visit the right domains. I mean, what is like the structural powers that the business actually have in ICANN? Because ICANN is like a non-profit organization, right?

MASON COLE

It's a really good question and a very complicated one, I'm afraid. To be honest with you, the structure of the GNSO doesn't always lend itself to productive outcomes. It's a smart structure, and it makes sense to have two houses, a Contracted Party House and a Non-Contracted Party House. It's difficult for anyone in any space to get what they want all the time inside of ICANN and that's as it should be. You know, it wouldn't be fair to every participant in the model if one side got everything they wanted all the time.

I think we all have our own opinions about power structures inside of ICANN and whether or not businesses are always treated fairly. So, I don't want to prejudge your own opinion about that or give you ideas that you shouldn't have. But as you participate in ICANN, I think you'll get a better sense of what positions are taken by what parties, how those positions are advanced, and what outcomes really have an impact on businesses.

So, ICANN is a complicated organization and it takes a lot to learn, and it takes a lot to learn how to participate and do it effectively, but I encourage you to keep at it. It's important work and it's important work for us to do. As I said, I've been doing this for 25 years and I'm going to keep doing it until I get it right. So, I hope that approach is an answer to your question.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And the last question in the Zoom, which is a pretty long question, but I would prefer the short answer for this. So, Balance Namati is asking, "I have a question about scope. UA today is mostly about humans, right? Browsers, email clients, web forms, but there are more and more AI agents resolving domains on their own now. They don't use address bars. They do DNS lookups in code through libraries and frameworks that I doubt anyone's testing for UA compliance."

"So, I'm curious whether the working group, and I assume here is BC, has looked at that and with the next gTLD round coming up, if we end up with something like an AI native namespace, a TLD that

basically says, this is an agent, not a person, then every agent framework out there would need to handle those names. Is anyone thinking about that side of it? Thank you.”

VIVEK GOYAL

Yeah, fantastic question. I would encourage you to ask that question to the ICANN board when you get a chance because I mean, honestly, that is a very relevant question. So today, the domain name space is based on human consumption. The reason we have a domain name because it's a wrapper to an IP address, but what happens when information is only exchanged within agents? They don't need a beautiful website because they are not going to look at it.

There is something called trust signals. So, as per conservative estimates, there'll be about 300 billion AI agents floating around in the internet by end of this year, early next year. If an agent wants to come to and access services on my business, how does that agent know on which domain name or IP address is my company's authentic agent sitting, right? And that is where I think the next round is very beneficial and not detrimental to the process.

Every brand can today, has the opportunity to acquire a dot brand and give a trust signal to the world which says that on this dot brand, all my agents sit. So, if you want to access an AI agent for say Nike, you can go to a domain name which says .nike and you'll

know it will always be true. And that is where the power of TLDs and dot brand sits.

So, if you represent a business or you have access to a brand, please go out in the world and explain to them about the second round. Tell them how beneficial this dot brand process is. And if you ever need any help, we, at the BC are available over an email, over a phone call, over WhatsApp to make that happen. But I thank you so much for that question and I encourage you to ask that to the ICANN board as well to get a different perspective. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you and thank you, Marie, for posting the information about the upcoming BC membership session on Tuesday. So, if you are interested, you definitely can go and participate. And with that, I would like to thank BC members, Mason, Vivek, to all of you, and to the members who came here, thank you for being with us. Yes.

VIVEK GOYAL

Pleasure meeting you all.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Round of applause to our BC members and we will move forward to learn about GAC, Government Advisory Committee. And it's my pleasure to introduce another bright fellow, the person who is now a mentor for the fellows, Tracy Hackshaw, who is a GAC member. He was nominated as a mentor for fellowship program and he will tell us about GAC and why he's there and what GAC is doing and

what are the important things that we can learn from you? Tracy, the floor is yours.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Thank you, my friend and fellow, fellow Siranush. We're all once a fellow, always a fellow, as they say. So, my name is Tracy Hackshaw. I represent the Universal Postal Union, which is a UN organization in the GAC. I am a GAC observer. You'll see a bit about that shortly.

Before I start, two things I want to ask, well, want to say. Many times, I come to this session and people ask questions about specific governments and why things are happening. I can't answer those questions about why a government is doing X, Y, and Z. I'm not representing any government here. I'm representing the GAC. As you know, the GAC is not of governments. So, if you have a question for the government that you're asking about, you should really ask that government representative, which leads to my second question or second issue.

How many of you know who your GAC rep is? Show of hands you know your GAC rep. You know who it is. Have you spoken to them already? Good. And those who don't know, you should really make it your interest to know.

On the GAC website, which is GAC, Government Advisory Committee, gac.icann, you know what ICANN means, right, .org, you can go there and click on Members or Representatives, it's

something like that. About the GAC, you'll see a whole list of names all publicly available. And some countries have one, some countries have five, but they're all there.

And all GAC meetings are open. It's open right now, it's going on as we speak right now. You can go into the room and find your GAC rep if you don't know. There are no country names, but you can ask or intercessionally, you can inquire from GAC staff who the GAC rep is maybe. They might be able to put you in touch with them. So that's very important for everyone, okay?

Know who your GAC rep is because I think when I talk about things here, you're going to want to inquire from them about whatever questions you have. I can answer questions about the GAC, not about a specific government, so I'll make sure that's clear. Always people ask me about government, why is this government doing this? I don't know and I can't answer, okay? That's a friendly reminder about those kinds of questions. All right, so let's begin.

So, getting to know the GAC. So, the GAC was one of the early organizations in ICANN. Any multistakeholder model governments have a role. So in 1999, there was a Government of Advisory Committee established and in ICANN, that means it's governments and what we call intergovernmental organizations. Like the UN type organizations, like the regional organizations, like the African Telecommunications Union or Asia Pacific, I think, Telecoms and so on.

So right now, there are 184 government members, that's countries. So, 184, and there are 41 intergovernmental organizations like IANA. So, members, so aggregates of countries in the organizations.

The only difference between the members and observers is that the observers cannot vote in the GAC and the GAC does not vote normally. They come to consensus on most of their decisions. Voting only takes place for elections, meaning electing their members and that's pretty much it. Everything else, in my experience, has always been coming to consensus.

What does consensus mean? In the GAC, it's pretty unique. You may have heard of something called rough consensus or other types of consensus. In the GAC, consensus means everybody agrees. And what does that mean? Everybody is equally unhappy with a decision and when you have that, you know that's consensus. Nobody wins. It's all everybody gets. It's compromise, work it through, and we achieve consensus.

If one member doesn't agree, there's no consensus. That's very important because in the bylaws of ICANN, the board responds to GAC consensus advice, has to be consensus advice, and that has been dealt with a few times.

As a matter of fact, very recently the board rejected GAC advice, one of the few times that ever happened. And we had to have a GAC bylaw mandated discussion with the board on this, and you come to the compromise thereafter. So, it's very important to

understand that the GAC works towards consensus because the bylaws mandates that the board responds to GAC advice. That's one of the important roles that GAC has.

GAC consists of a leadership team made up of chairs, one chair sorry, and five vice chairs. It roughly approximates the regions, although it doesn't really work out that way all the time, but it's a rough approximate to all regions of the world are represented in the leadership. We also have a support team that you can always reach out to. I think the address is on the website, but that's why I mentioned that if you want to reach out to your GAC reps, you use the support team to find out if they can connect you.

All right, how does the GAC work? I mentioned this already. Consensus advice, you'll get his presentation afterwards so I'm not going to speak to the slides because that takes too long so just to let you know what's going on.

We generate a communiqué at the end of the meeting, which is very, I won't say unique, but it's certainly something that GAC does and people look out for it because in the communiqué, the advice is there. Sometimes there's no advice, but it is of importance and the board also responds to that.

So, the GAC generally meets with community, discusses topics, and at the end of the meeting produces a communiqué representing what happened in the meeting including whether or not they've come to agreement on issue X, issue Y. And therefore, you find the board having to respond to that intersessionally between

meetings, and we have meetings in between to deal with those issues. So, the GAC meets face-to-face three times a year.

You can imagine 184 governments, hard to bring them together. So, we meet face-to-face at the ICANN public meetings three times a year, and we also meet intersessionally, virtually using Zoom. We generate meeting minutes and so on. All those things are online. Everything is pretty much open now so you can see all of our documentation, all of the advice generated over the last several years. And we also use working groups to do the work that is very technical.

So, DNS abuse, public safety, human rights, and the sort of regions which I chair and so on. There're working groups there. You can go to their website and see all of that work and the documents produced there as well. So very open, very transparent.

What's the role of the GAC? As I said, we provide advice to the ICANN board on issues of public policy. That's the primary role, but we do also work with the community proactively before this happens. So, I don't say we provide advice to the community, but we work with the rest of the community, the GNSO, the At-Large groups, the security stability and so on, to work through issues before producing advice. And it's not just about producing advice to the board.

But obviously, we have this special role, provide advice in accordance with these principles and the bylaws, Section 12.2, AX to XI of the ICANN bylaws. Everything is linkable, you can get it

there. And this is just to say what I said earlier, the board must take the advice into consideration. It can't ignore it. It has to discuss it and it has to deal with it and potentially reject it if it doesn't agree with it, which has happened at least once or twice recently.

Again, you can go through this in the slides. This is the very detailed workflow of how GAC advice is generated, consensus advice of what happens, if it's rejected and so on. So, you can have a look at that. And our working methods are primarily through its operating principles. And as I said, we meet intercessionally as well as at ICANN meetings. I think we're the only organization that does all six languages, UN languages. So, if you don't speak English, the GAC room is probably your best room to come in.

We get all six UN languages and Portuguese, so seven languages. I'm not sure if Hindi in this meeting as well, but sometimes we go to the countries and, like in this session, you do the home country as well.

I mentioned the communiqué and minutes, et cetera. All our meetings are open, including our virtual meetings. If you know it's happening, you can attend those as well. There's no closed GAC meeting.

In the communiqué drafting, it's live. So, when it happens, you can look at the schedule and see GAC communiqué drafting. You can actually come to the communiqué drafting and see the communiqué being drafted real time. And it's a good opportunity

to take a look at what's happening when governments get together and talk about things.

For the communiqué, what happens is that we generate it at the end of the meeting. That's the goal and then there's 72 hours for it to marinate and then it's literally published, I think it's the Monday after the meeting ends and it works out to be Monday. So, you don't see it until Monday, but if you're in the room, you'll see the finished product on the last drafting day.

Sometimes we do this thing called a high-level government meeting. It tends to happen once every two years. It was affected by COVID, so you saw there's a six-year gap between the last one in Spain in 2018 and Rwanda in 2024. My understanding is that if all goes well, it's going to be in Oman in October this year, in 2026, Muscat. We'll see how things go.

And in that meeting you don't get just the GAC reps, you get the high-level officials so ministers, permanent secretaries, CEOs. Whatever your country has as the head of its internet or tech telecoms or digital authority, they come to the meetings then as well and that's sort of like a summit. We don't call it that, but that's what it's effectively called and you get all the board members and ICANN coming and interacting with the high-level officials in those meetings.

As I said, we have a lot of working groups, website, have a look at them. And the ones that interest you, like for example, we don't have an environment one, but there are ones that may not seem to

be DNS related. So, the GAC is one of the locations you find that the remit of ICANN is not necessarily stuck to.

The GAC tends to broaden its discussions, to talk about things that may not be ICANN-specific, much to the chagrin of ICANN staff, but therefore it discusses things like the WSIS outcomes, the IGF, inter-governance as a whole, spam, all those things which ICANN doesn't like to get themselves involved in. But the GAC does try to pick those issues up there, but bring it back into the ICANN fold eventually.

So maybe we'll discuss broadly, but then it comes down to the DNS thereafter. So, if you want to discuss things like the environment, that's an interesting place to raise issues about the impact of the climate use on the DNS or on the internet or vice versa, which is the case. Maybe I'll stop there, Siranush, and let some questions come now.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Yes, absolutely.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Because everything else is in the slide.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Yes, we have hands to ask. Yes, Valeriia, please go ahead and the lady behind, just get ready.

VALERIIA FILINOVYCH

Valeriia Filinovych for the record. I'm wondering, how does the GAC balance national policy priorities with a multi-stakeholder model of internet governance? Thank you.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Very carefully. That's a good question. Yeah, so there was once a time when one of our GAC members said that they don't feel that there's an equal voice in the ICANN world because in the multistate model, they're supposed to have an equal voice, right?

And if you already think about it in the ICANN model, the GAC could only provide advice whereas the general makes policy. The governments, that's reverse in the other worlds where the governments make policy, so it's about it's a balancing act in the ICANN, just everything from that perspective. Because we don't as the GAC make policy. We even don't -- well, juries are the influence policy, but we certainly provide advice on policy.

So, in terms of balancing specific country interests and the multistate model, that is exactly where that nexus happens. Trying to understand, even within the GAC ourselves, how we can put aside our national interests sometimes and look at the broader perspective. But on several occasions, the national interests do come in and that's where you get the exciting discussions, so you can see the geopolitics play out.

And many times, the GAC meetings are just rehearsal for the UN discussions which is interesting if you follow those as well and the reverse. Sometimes the UN discussions come into the GAC discussions, like the WSIS or the GDC and so on. So that's how it's balanced. Again, the remit is quite narrow.

The only thing I would say is that many countries who are smaller, less resourced, don't fully understand the ICANN model so they don't say as much here and I think that's problematic. So, you tend to find the voices of certain countries are louder than others. Here we're in the UN or other agencies that will be more equal, if you want to say that, because of their positions and proper support. Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you. Please, go ahead.

JOYSA KAUSHIK

Hi, so I'm Joysa Kaushik for the record and thank you for the talk. So, my question is, I'm curious if you faced a situation where the board and the community are like on completely poles apart on their interests and they're not ready to negotiate. So, if yes, how do you deal with such situations?

TRACY HACKSHAW

You mean the Board and the GAC?

JOYSA KAUSHIK

So, the Board members and the community --

TRACY HACKSHAW

The wider community?

JOYSA KAUSHIK

Yes, completely different interests and different opinions on certain topic and they are not ready to come midway or negotiate. So, there's like no consensus between the board and the community, so how do you deal with such situations?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

By saying community, you mean government, governments?

JOYSA KAUSHIK

Yeah, the government members, yeah.

TRACY HACKSHAW

It only happened once before, as far as I recall. If you go on google.xxx, you'll see one point in time where the board and the GAC just did not ever agree on a topic. And when it didn't agree, the board won because the GAC couldn't really provide advice. GAC didn't like it, but the board said in that scenario, there's nothing else the GAC can do, really. So, dot triple X was delegated, whereas the GAC did not want it to be delegated.

In the recent situation where it was on the applicant support program, where there were several issues which I was involved in,

where the GAC was trying to ensure that the underserved regions were more represented in the applicant support program, through various, I would say, very strong methods, the board didn't agree with those because it wasn't part of policy.

But we did reach a compromise, which has reflected in a very good take-up in the applicant support program eventually. So, I think, to answer your question, it's very unlikely that happens, but when it does, the board does in fact win, if you want to call it that. Thanks.

JOYSA KAUSHIK

Okay, so doesn't that defy the entire concept of multi-stakeholder model? Because if, like the opinions are not heard then what's the point?

TRACY HACKSHAW

Well, I wouldn't say they're not heard, it's just that the model in ICANN has that quirk where the decisions that are being made are being made by the board of directors. I don't know I can go any further than that, so that's the quirk and there's no other way out of it. But since then, that's 2010 that happened and since then there's been no similar type of situation.

I think in all honesty that was a mistake to have that happen that way from both sides, I will just be frank. So, since then, we've seen advice being treated differently. It was a tipping point. So, advice was treated differently and now we work towards compromise.

So, the question you're asking, it probably would not arise in the future, but if it does arise in the future, I don't think there's another way out except that the board's decision is final. Yeah?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN Thank you. Yes, please, go ahead.

BERNHART FARRAS SUKANDAR Good afternoon, sir. I'm Bernhart Farras from Indonesia, NextGen. So, based on my experience working at the Indonesian domain registry, so not all registry can like be really sovereign in terms of operational things, right?

Like I mean not every single ccTLD domain is managed by their own country. So, I would like to know your views and the current initiatives where it will be headed. I mean, like is the GAC pushing for like every single country need to be able to manage their own domains or how it would look like, that's first. The second one is other than the – yeah, sure, sure.

TRACY HACKSHAW Question, sir.

BERNHART FARRAS SUKANDAR Sure, sure.

TRACY HACKSHAW

As for this question, I'm going to revert to my earlier point where I can't speak to individual country issues. But in terms of a general policy view, the GAC itself has been talking to the ccNSO and IANA about those issues. It's mostly redelegation issues, not sovereignty as such.

The issue that they're trying to resolve is that, if a country sees that a ccTLD is not being managed in the way that it should, how do they get that repaired, right? So that's the issue, not that they want the domain. So, I think that's a misnomer. They don't just want the domain. They are trying to fix a problem that they're seeing.

For example, it's being managed by a foreign entity and there's no revenue coming to the country and the country thinks that's not right and so on. They're trying to fix that and it's done on a case-by-case basis. There's no policy decision on the GAC on that basis.

However, you do see members agreeing in a general way that government should have a say in the management of ccTLDs if that's allowed. Like it's the same multistakeholder model in the country, so both directions. And that if it's only government, it should be more broad and if it's not government, it should have government involvement. But beyond that, each country has its own thing going on and the GAC doesn't get involved in those specific individual discussions.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And the second part of the question?

BERNHART FARRAS SUKANDAR Yeah, the second part is continuing that. I mean, like a country who can manage it is like a group of people who's able to manage it, right? I mean, like what is the GAC current initiatives to improve maybe their literacy?

Because like if they have a say and there is something that they want to change immediately or urgently, how can they react as soon as possible if they don't have any operational skills? So, like, what is the GAC advice, or what is the GAC stance, or what is the initiative that's already going for that kind of issues?

TRACY HACKSHAW That sounds like a country-specific issue. You're trying to pick on a country-specific issue there. So, I know what they're trying to do and I'm not going to fall into the trap.

Again, each country has its own specific challenges. The GAC has no broad policy on this issue. If you think there's an issue with your specific country, raise it with the GAC rep and maybe they can get involved. If you want to discuss it more broadly, feel free to come to the meeting and ask a GAC rep to raise it. I think it's fine. Yeah?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN Okay, please go ahead and then Nancy.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Thank you. My name is Rohan Sachdeva. I'm NextGen fellow. My question is about, how does GAC membership work? Because I was reading about it, Taiwan is a member of the GAC, but Somaliland is not. So, how does it work and does politics come into GAC as well? Thank you.

TRACY HACKSHAW

The answer to the last question is yes, it is politics by definition. GAC members, we don't necessarily respect the UN list necessarily. So, there are 192 UN members, but in the GAC, you may find more, we're 184 now. Because I believe if I'm not mistaken, I could be wrong, you can join as a territory as well as a member country.

And the EU is a member. EU Commission is a member. In the UN they are an observer because they're not treated that the same way. So, the definition is on the website. The GAC members are distinct economies and that could be any measure you could look at. So, it doesn't respect the UN definition.

How do you join the GAC? It's pretty straightforward. The authority in the country or the territory or the distinct economy sends a letter, official letter, stating, "Hi, I am Country X. We are interested in joining the GAC at ICANN. Our representative shall be X or represent shall be X and Y or Z." And you have an official signature and seal.

The GAC doesn't necessarily say what ministry is involved. If it's a ministry of telecoms, fine. If it was a regulator, they also send

another letter. Great. They can also join. They don't really say, "Okay, you're allowed only this ministry or that."

They just say, "Well, if it's official, feel free and if you want to come to the meetings, come and you sort it out amongst yourselves. If you have two or three reps from different ministries there, figure it out who speaks." Yeah, and you had a second question besides the one I just answered.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

No, we'll take last question probably from Nancy and if you have the second question, you can take a break.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Thank you.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Ask it during the break. Nancy, please go ahead.

NANCY KANASA

Hi, thank you. My name is Nancy. I'm an ICANN85 fellow. So, actually, I work with the government in my country. I've been around IGF for I think three or four years, represented my government also and I'm interested in also some of the issues within IGF. And I'm also interested in if you could explain the process of how I could become a rep within my country.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Right, so I think I just hinted at it there. So, it's your authority -- well, first you have to talk to your authority because you have to get your name on the list. Your authority writes to the GAC staff. So, it's on a website.

Actually, there's a whole process on the website, how to do it. An official letter, official letterhead, signed, sealed, I believe, I think and it says exactly that I would like to nominate person X. Even if there's a person already there, you can nominate someone else or let's say another entity can nominate another person from a different agency and the GAC doesn't judge. The Sec doesn't say, "Well, this person's already here, so you can't." They just say, "Okay, fine. You're added to the mailing list."

It's a very simple process after that you're just added to the mailing list and then you figure out when the meeting is and you come. No one stops you at the door and checks, who are you? They don't say, "Are you from PNG?" Sit at the table and you are there. It is actually quite easy, beyond getting the letter in and so on.

Most people don't do things like that, just walk in and sit in a room and pretend to be a government. So, we have a kind of an honor system that if you do that, you know, that's off your rocker. But more likely most people in the room sitting, they are representing their governments, we hope and they are can speak on behalf of their governments, yeah.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

There are three people who want to ask you questions, so please stay a bit longer here during the break. And we would like to thank you on behalf of our group, newcomers team here, fellows, NextGen-ners and NIXI fellows as well for you coming here and talking about GAC priorities.

And if you want to see how GAC is working, during the week they will be writing this communiqué, so please, feel free to go and observe the process. It's very interesting just to observe how they work. Sometimes I go there and just sit there to see how they work together.

So, thank you, Tracy. Our round of applause is for Tracy and with that this meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much. We can stop the recording.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]