
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – ICANN Annual Strategy Review
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VICTORIA YANG

Hello and welcome to the ICANN Annual Strategy Review Environmental Scan session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standard of Behavior, the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy, and the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct concerning statement of interest. Please observe the following guidelines to participate in this session. I will also post them in the chat for your reference. Only questions posted in the Zoom chat identified as a question will be read out during this session. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand in Zoom. When speaking, please state your name for the record and speak clearly at a reasonable pace. I will now hand the floor over to the Board Strategic Planning Committee Chair, AMITABH Singhal.

AMITABH SINGHAL

Thank you so much, VICTORIA YANG. Good afternoon. I know it's post-lunch, so it's a difficult session, but I think we'll try and make it interesting as we go along.

Thank you all for coming forward to contribute to this brainstorming session as part of the environmental scan of the Annual Strategy Review program. On behalf of the ICANN Board, the Board Strategic Planning Committee leads the process to

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develop and review ICANN's strategic plan. Currently, we are in Strategic Plan FY26-30, and it's been one year of adoption. Community input is critical to this process, and I'm here as the chair of the ICANN Board Strategic Planning Committee.

Annual review of this plan basically is to test whether the assumptions that we had in developing the strategy still remain valid. Given the shifting sands in terms of global trends, technology trends, and governance trends, for example, do we really need to look at not rewriting the plan, but to test those assumptions that we made earlier? We want to test whether the direction that we are in is oriented correctly. The risks that we anticipated—and if you're familiar with the strategic plan, you would see that there are strategic risks at every step that we have mapped out—are the risks that we anticipated evolving as expected? Are there new dynamics emerging from that which may warrant a re-look, a sharpening of our focus, or some recalibration?

Maybe you feel that, given the environmental situation, at a very high level, we need to refocus or readjust some of our priorities. Did we underestimate something that we had not taken into account earlier? Maybe we need to take that into account now, given the shifts in our environment. Please feel free to give your candid opinion. I think these developments that we have to look at do have a bearing on ICANN's long-term legitimacy, and it's an exercise that will test our strength in terms of sustainability and relevance.

Feel free to give your opinions. Keep it at a high level. Let's try and avoid operational details unless you really feel very strongly about something. Having said that, I will basically invite you to start the strategic discussion. Before that, let me hand it over to Becky Nash, who leads our team on strategic planning. Thank you. I look forward to a very dynamic discussion.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much, Amitabh. Thank you everyone for joining us here at ICANN 85. Also for those of you that are online, thank you for joining this session. This is an environmental scan session as part of the Annual Strategy Review program. The program is intended to happen within each five years of the adopted strategic plan. Once it's adopted, we then take this opportunity to have a brainstorming session during the three years in between the adoption in order to make sure that any significant insights or emerging trends are captured.

The goal of this session is to have an open dialogue. That's how we're going to run it and ask that people provide their insights. People challenge any of the assumptions, as Amitabh had said, about the assumptions that the Board used to develop the strategic plan, and then also to identify areas that may require deeper discussion and follow-up. This particular session is not intended at this time to make decisions about revising any strategies or resolving any problems. It really is an open dialogue

where we can talk amongst the community in order to receive insights.

We would request that people stay at the strategic level, not the operational level or execution of strategy. We're really looking for that long-term horizon of what are some of the topics that are either underway or that we expect on the horizon in order to ensure that there's follow-up and deeper conversation that happens. Please speak from your perspective, your evidence, your experiences. We also acknowledge that we would like everyone to make space for different perspectives and have a dialogue about that. It is a Q&A and a dialogue that we're having here today.

As I indicated, please focus on the strategic implications from a longer-term horizon so that we can take this information along with other environmental scan information and provide the Board Strategic Planning Committee with data and information that would require additional follow-up and deeper research. As part of this session, we attached and provided materials as pre-reading materials. If you haven't had a chance to read them, I hope following the session that you do have a chance to read them.

We would also like to say that any follow-up can be sent to us at planning@icann.org, which is our email. If you do have additional insights after this session, please do send them our way. The first external environmental trend or assumption that's listed here for food for thought is regarding technological developments, security, and trust in the Internet unique identifier systems. This

influences directly the adopted strategies that we have, and we want to understand if there are any perspectives here today about any emerging trends related to the unique identifier systems that are impacted by technological developments.

One trend, just to start off, is that on one hand, some technological advancements may present opportunities to strengthen security and resilience of the unique identifier systems. On the other hand, some technological developments may result in fragmentation and lack of trust, or perhaps challenge the universality of the unique identifier systems. What we're going to do now is open the floor for anyone to provide their perspective about technological developments and impact on security and trust in the Internet's unique identifier systems. If anyone has any perspectives online or here in the room, please just announce yourself and use the microphone. Thank you.

RAGINI KANUNGO

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ragini Kanungo for the record. I am a NIXI fellow at ICANN 85. I'm a lawyer by qualification, but have been working in the tech space policy for quite some time now. I also recently attended the AI Impact Summit, which was held in New Delhi. One of the key takeaways for me from that summit was the rise in agentic AIs. While we are trying to grapple with AI chatbots and other tools, these big companies have already started venturing towards developing and, moreover, implementing agentic AI tools as well.

With regards to that, one of the key concerns that came to my mind was that in the future, maybe a decade down the lane, when most of the people would be using AI agents for their tasks, how would the Domain Name System change with regards to if I delegate the registration of a domain name for me to my AI agent? What would be the legal implications for it? Because at the end of the day, my control over it would be eroded. How does ICANN take into consideration those kind of future challenges that may arise? How do we look forward to agentic AI specifically, an agentic AI integrated Domain Name System, specifically the registration part, the KYC part, the background checks, and so on and so forth? Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much. Very good perspective. For our external environmental trends, we are starting with technological advances as it relates to the unique identifier systems, but we also know that AI will come up through all our sessions or segments of this session, and we do have a specific slide on that as well.

VICTORIA YANG

As we received comment on this trend, I just advanced the slides. We can go back to the first slides as well. Basically, the first two trends that we want to hear from you and your perspective are one on technological development, which Becky summarized for us, and then the other one will be artificial intelligence. How is that

going to impact unique identifier systems? Feel free to comment on both, and we are welcome to hear your point, please.

SIVASUBRAMANIAN
MUTHUSAMY

On AI, there is a question about bad actors abusing AI to do harm to the DNS or through the DNS. The response to that should be for ICANN to use AI to counter the bad use, and not only to counter that, but also to go beyond and use AI in a manner that they will, with human intelligence, use AI to detect what has not been detected so far and address problems that have not been solved so far. To that extent, maybe even ICANN could develop its own version of AI in collaboration with Claude and other actors, maybe an AI engine. I already said that on a chat somewhere, but I'm repeating it for context. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Very interesting perspective, Siva. Use AI to combat AI. Anyone else?

STEVE CHU

My name is Steve. I'm an ICANN 85 fellow as well. I am based in New York. My comment or observation is that just during the course of the meeting here in Mumbai so far, I've heard in coffee cooler type of conversations observations that things at ICANN tend to move very slowly. I don't state that as a criticism; I think that's the inherent nature of the multi-stakeholder model. I don't know if ICANN has really, as an entity, publicly acknowledged that.

Anyway, my comment is in regards to my colleague's point about AI and the risks that AI has posed. AI in particular is moving very, very fast. In my other sphere, I'm involved in a number of AI data center projects. The point is, there's an intense race with AI. My comment is: what is ICANN doing knowing that we have a lot of stakeholders involved in this, given on that one extreme to try to build consensus, but on the other end, we have an AI that is moving at rapid speed? How does ICANN intend to catch up and stay ahead of the curve, if not at the very least stay current? Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you very much, and I like where you're going with this comment. Because this is an environmental scan session, we are trying to collect perspectives, just like what you shared. The honest answer is we don't know; we don't have an answer or solution. That's why we are trying to see what is on the horizon, what is emerging, and what are things that may impact us, so that we can collect different perspectives to deepen our understanding. The next step is to take this to see if there's anything needing deeper or follow-up discussion. Thank you very much for sharing this and posting all these very interesting questions.

ALFREDO CALDERON

Yes. I'm Alfredo Calderon, acting as a mentor for the NextGen program in this meeting. My concern is following up with what he mentioned. I know that emerging technologies, especially AI, are evolving constantly. My impression is that ICANN, at this stage,

finds it difficult to be in front of it because we don't know actually where it is going. Now, my concern is in terms of quantum computing. What is happening within ICANN? As we all know, quantum computing is sort of machine learning in a faster or speedier form that could impact immediately what's happening with the DNS systems. What's happening there?

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much, Alfredo, for your comment there. That brings up another aspect of an area of an emerging topic to evaluate. Are there any other perspectives? Any dialogue as it relates to several of the comments that have been surfaced? Anyone online have a perspective that they'd like to share?

VICTORIA YANG

I also see we have more people joined us in the session. Please feel free to come join us at the table. This is a brainstorming session. We do want to hear from you. There's no right or wrong, and it's about perspective sharing. There are more seats, so feel free to join us. All right. We heard a lot of comments about AI, and we did open up with the first trend, which is about technological development, security, and trust in the unique identifier system. I just want to circle back to see if there's any other perspective or anything you want to share for the first trends.

VICTORIA YANG

For those who are online, if you would like to participate, please raise your hand, and we will take turns from the participants in the room and those who are online. Please.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Thank you. My name is Rohan Sachdeva. I'm a NextGen fellow. Today we did a presentation on the NextGen presentations, and my topic was Universal Acceptance. In that, what I discovered was the new AI website builders that are coming up are not Universal Acceptance compliant. I did a bit of an experiment where I asked an AI builder to make a website for me in five minutes just by giving it a prompt, and it did it very well. But the main problem was when I tried to execute some system, for example, a web form, it did not accept my IDN domains. Maybe that's an underlying issue with the new tools that are coming by AI within the AI ecosystem. Maybe we need to look into that because that directly impacts our Universal Acceptance work. Thank you.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you for sharing your experience. All right. I don't see any additional hands. Becky, should we move on to the next trend?

BECKY NASH

Sure. Also, just like to remind all the participants that, again, should you have any additional thoughts or insights that you'd like to share, please feel free to email us at any time at planning@icann.org for any additional follow-ups. We realize that

we have limited time in this particular session, so again, we welcome any of your comments.

Okay, so this next external environmental trend or assumption relates to the DNS marketplace. There is some uncertainty about the potential success or failure of certain of the new gTLDs in the near future, due to the fact that some of the participants in the 2012 round faced challenges in gaining user adoption or limited market demand for their offering. The 2026 round of new gTLDs may bring further challenges and risks in this area or may reflect new opportunities such as stronger branding, more inclusivity of other languages and scripts, and enhanced innovation in digital identity.

What are the impacts then on the DNS marketplace? This is what we're asking for any observations or thoughts about your insights on external environmental trends for the DNS marketplace. We've identified two other emerging trends as it relates to the evolving nature of user preferences, such as the increase in the usage of AI and the popularity of apps. This could all change the way society uses domain names, and it could impact the demand for domain names.

Finally, another trend possibly is the rise of alternative naming systems. This does raise some strategic questions for ICANN, such as how will this impact user experience and the trust in the DNS? How can governance, stability, and user clarity of the Domain Name System can be maintained in these evolutions? Is there anyone here in the room or online that has some perspective of any

emerging trends, risks, and/or opportunities as it relates to the DNS marketplace? We have several hands, so please go ahead and announce yourself when you speak. Thank you.

RAGINI KANUNGO

Good afternoon to all. My name is Ragini Kanungo for the record. I'm a NIXI fellow at ICANN 85. I think I raised this question in one of the previous sessions I'd attended as well. It is with regards to the growing popularity and usage of social media as a platform for specifically small-scale businesses to increase their popularity and interact with consumers. I know about several brands which exist solely on social media, and they're able to flourish their business very well. There's a little bit of lesser knowledge about registering domain names as well.

How do we mitigate that? How do we bridge that gap between more popularity of social media web pages in comparison to registered domain names? Adding on to one more insight on this, I think one of the key differences between having a page on social media and a registered domain name would be that with regards to social media, the control lies in the hand of the company. With regards to the website, the end user has a little bit more control. I think with regards to content regulation and takedown as well, it is a lot easier to take down content from social media through internal state and non-state factors, and slightly more checks and balances when it comes to registered domain names. Maybe that is

something that we could all discuss about and think how to go about it. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much. Very good insights on the DNS marketplace. We have another participant. Please go ahead.

ANDREW CAMPLING

Thank you. Andrew Campling. I run a consultancy, and I'm a trustee of the Internet Watch Foundation. Two comments on the latter two paragraphs. I could see that AI might reduce the need for domain names by organizations, a bit like smartphones did the same for phone numbers. You could see that trend. Conversely, I think there's a lot of literature out there now suggesting that agentic AI will separately drive up demand for domain names, acting as a sort of trust anchor—as a key identifier, if you will, for the agents. That could counteract the reduced demand on the other side.

Secondly, on the alternative naming systems, having looked into that a bit, I think there's scope for positivity there if there's integration between the DNS and some of those alternative namespaces, but with the proviso that the governance processes are brought onto those alternative namespaces. Currently a lot of them are a bit like the Wild West by design. If they were integrated but without changes to their governance systems, that would be very damaging. It would require the DNS governance model to be brought over to those namespaces to make it viable.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much for your comments there. Are there any other discussion points we have? Go ahead, please.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

With the new gTLD round—sorry, my name is Rohan Sachdeva, and I'm a NextGen fellow. With the new gTLD round, I was thinking, can there be a new wave of transformation on how brands identify themselves? For example, if Adidas has .adidas for themselves, they build their whole digital ecosystem around that new gTLD. That maybe can be a good option for those brands who don't just want to have .coms and .aus but want to build something of their own. In that case, I'm not sure how it works, but my understanding is there is a fee involved in registering a new gTLD. Would that prevent small businesses from developing their own brands, like a digital ecosystem? Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much for your insights there. Any further comments or questions? Okay, Siva and then the gentleman here.

SIVASUBRAMANIAN
MUTSUHANI

Ragini just a moment ago raised a point that is of interest to the whole domain industry. She was talking about the distinction between social media and a website. The distinction goes much beyond what you said. A social media website is walled content accessible only for the users, whereas a website has Universal

Acceptance. The reason why small businesses prefer social media is that it's easy to set up; there is a template, whereas the web is more open to use any technologies. The cost of building a website and the technical complications are way too high for a very basic average user. This is what ICANN could also help in streamlining and making it easier for the end user to create websites and certificates. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you. We have another participant. Please go ahead.

SANTOSH BISWAKARMA

My name is Santosh Biswakarma. I'm from Zensar. Regarding the complexity of developing a website, I believe there are already multiple users or third parties making these things easy, like Wix and those things. Are you saying that ICANN should provide some features that can make those developments of websites easy?

SIVASUBRAMANIAN
MUTSUHANI

What I'm saying is entirely opposite to what you're saying. You're talking about platforms like Wix and several other platforms where a customer goes in and gets trapped. They have to continue using their services and use it as per their terms, whereas the web is supposed to be open. The point I'm proposing is for ICANN to make it easier for the average user to use open technologies openly without getting trapped and without finding it difficult, as easy as it is for them to use a Facebook account.

SANTOSH BISWAKARMA

Agree. I believe ICANN basically works on the Domain Name System side, not the content of that. That's a very different perspective. I do agree it can be a feature of ICANN, and they can enhance on this factor.

AMITABH SINGHAL

I think this is getting interesting because now it's a brainstorming session. There's no harm in fleshing out some perspectives and being focused. It's good to get some clarity as to what you two mean because both perspectives are important for us to understand the trends. Ragini raised the point, which is a broader strategic point for us. What you're looking at, like I said, doesn't have to go very operational, but there are implications. He just said ICANN is not into content; we don't help develop content. That is for the registrars and web hosting companies who have this business model. How will that shape up? If you can discuss that a little more focusedly, it'll help us get clarity. Sorry, please go ahead.

SIVASUBRAMANIAN
MUTSUHANI

ICANN not getting into content is more in the nature of looking at content—what kind of content is there, whether it's harmful or not. That is what ICANN avoids. The type of technology that I'm talking about is to make it easy for the domain user to use the domain in a responsible way that is useful for him. That is a more detached technical help that ICANN provides to all domain users without

getting into what kind of content they create. It's only about technology; it's enabling technology. That would not interfere with ICANN's limitation of not going into content.

AMITABH SINGHAL

Siva, just a correction in the terminology: ICANN's mandate does not include content. We don't go beyond our technical mandate that we have as per our bylaws developed by the community. That is just a comment.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER

Regarding how we can reduce the friction of people getting onto their own websites and domains, had it been easy for them to get up and running with their own website, they would not have chosen social media because then they are boxed in. They are in a section in which they have to follow the social media platform they are using. ICANN can work on reducing the friction for them to be up and running their business as soon as possible, similar to what social media does. They have their pages, their website, and their product catalogs ready in five minutes. In a similar way, the ICANN community can work on getting this friction reduced so that more people are open as well as onto the Internet. [inaudible] from Zensar Technologies, for the record.

BECKY NASH

Thank you. Very insightful comments. We have a few more hands. First you, gentleman, and then you.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Rohan Sachdeva, NextGen fellow. Based on my colleague's comment, I just want to add from a small business perspective that a lot of customers spend a lot of time on social media. That's one of the reasons why everybody's moving to social media through ads and reels. I think it's really hard to stop that; it's natural and happening. Maybe we need to come up with something different then. Thank you.

STEVE CHU

Steve Chu, ICANN 85 fellow from New York. Just in response to and piggyback on the comment earlier about the content aspect, I do understand that ICANN's bylaws state it does not want to be in the business of policing content. With that being said, in the theoretical aspect of usability studies and designs, form necessarily informs content, and content necessarily informs form. The difference between form and content is inseparable.

Also, we see similar arguments playing out in social media platforms. When Facebook and the like are under attack for not doing enough to police content, their argument is, "We're merely a platform, so we're not in the business of policing content or suppressing freedom of expression." My comment is that I would fundamentally challenge this separation between content and the mechanism—the domain by which content is delivered. I don't think that as a community we can fully extricate ourselves from the

responsibility that comes with the delivery of that content. Thank you.

RAGINI KANUNGO

Good afternoon. My name is Ragini Kanungo for the record, a NIXI fellow at ICANN 85. Just to follow up on the comments made in the room so far, I think the reason why there's a distinction between content and just the domain regulation is because on social media and these apps, there are algorithms which propagate certain content. That is onto a separate discussion altogether. Whereas specifically talking about websites, it's more or less on the end user what he or she eventually uploads or wants to show. Just to highlight that one aspect. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much for your comments. Just checking if there's any other further comments or dialogue on this? If not, we can move to the next trend. VICTORIA YANG?

VICTORIA YANG

Before we move on to the next trend, I see more people walked in, so you are welcome to join us at the table. This is a brainstorming session; we want to hear from everyone about different perspectives. We are about to move into internal trends. These are topics that touch upon all of us because by internal here, we mean the ICANN ecosystem—not just the organization, but the community and the Board as well. We are in this together.

The first internal trend we want to discuss with you is ICANN's multi-stakeholder model: what's your perspective about the community's growth, structure, and so on? There are a couple of things we highlight here as a conversation starter. We all know that the current ICANN community includes a substantial number of long-standing participants. While we absolutely appreciate and recognize the benefit of having experienced veterans in the community, we also have to balance that against encouraging knowledge transfer and the need for younger and motivated policy participants. I know we have a lot of veterans here in the room; I would love to hear what your perspective is on that.

Also, we have plenty of data showing that we have no problem bringing people into the ICANN community. We have no problem generating interest once we explain what ICANN does and how your work impacts everyone globally. People are interested and then they get involved. Now, I do think that we still face some challenge to transfer that interest into meaningful participation into policy development, working groups, and so on. This is the time that we want to hear from you all. We see fellows here on the table as well. What is your experience and your observation perspective? Veterans like Alfredo, you are the mentor of the fellowship, so we would like to hear from you. The floor is yours.

ALFREDO CALDERON

I have a lot of things to say. I'm Alfredo Calderon, a mentor for the NextGen. I was a mentor for the fellowship program as well. I'm also

a member of the At-Large community. Since the beginning of my getting involved in ICANN, which was a long, long time ago, my biggest concern is how do we engage the end user in what's happening within ICANN? There are a lot of people outside of ICANN that have the knowledge and the skills to get involved, but they're not aware of what ICANN is all about.

Internally, we have to figure out a way to spread the message at different sectors of the community. How can we do that? Do we need to increase programs like the NIXI fellows, the fellowship program, or the NextGen program? We probably also need to do something with other initiatives that some groups within ICANN have, because we're lacking that new blood that we need. We're not going to be around forever, which is why I'm involved with the fellowship and NextGen program. I won't be here forever, and I'm still learning, but I'm trying to transfer the little that I know to a younger audience. We need to figure out other initiatives we can do outside of ICANN to get people involved.

ANDREW CAMPLING

Andrew Campling again. There are three learnings from a different community which may well be applicable here, and that's the IETF. If I reinterpret this as how to inject additional engagement—not just more youthful engagement—part of that is by remaining relevant. The IETF has recently started quite a lot of work that's AI-related, unsurprisingly, and that's brought an injection of people from very different communities. They are not necessarily younger,

but certainly from a whole different set of spaces, such as intellectual property lawyers who weren't previously the sort of people that you'd find often in the IETF.

That's helpful as it generates different discussions. Does that mean the scope of ICANN is relevant? Maybe that suggests looking again at the articles, things like content, and seeing if there's an opportunity to broaden it to attract different engagement. The other thing which seemed to work quite well in the IETF is renaming its program to a New Participants program, because it was assumed that you had to be young to join that. By changing the name to New Participant, that said you could be an experienced participant. That actually got a lot more traction from a whole host of people, made it easier, and removed that barrier to entry. Being relevant and making it easier to access would be the two main learnings.

VICTORIA YANG

Thank you so much, Andrew, for sharing that. Just one comment about when I say younger generation: I don't mean just younger, I mean new. That's a very good point; thank you for that. We have a comment from this side.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER

Hi. My name is Valli from the APAC IPv6 Council, for the record. This interests me because you say you're looking at NextGen participants as fellows. Before I knew about this, as an end user, I

was not aware that ICANN has fellowships and all those things. It would be great if ICANN can actually collaborate. For example, we are one of the councils. If you can collaborate with councils like this where they have direct communication with the end users, you will get more participation through them. We also have fellowship programs, and we know NIXI has a lot of fellowship programs.

We have people who are very much interested in being a part of ICANN, but they're not aware of the fellowship starting date, the end date, or when to apply. Not many people are aware of these things, as far as I know. It would be great if ICANN can actually collaborate with people who directly communicate with the end users. In that case, ICANN can get more new participants joining. I agree with Mr. Alfredo that we need more new people inside ICANN. That's my suggestion. Thank you.

ILHAM SUTOYO

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ilham, and I'm a NextGen 85. My main point has already been said by a lot of colleagues here. Just sharing my thoughts and my opinions, the community outreach, especially for the university students, is not really broad yet in my opinion. I don't have exact data because I didn't do research on it, but I do know and understand that not a lot of my colleagues and friends know about ICANN and what we are literally doing. They do not even know about Internet governance and so on.

I study at the University of Sydney, and they don't know that. I'm also coming from Indonesia, and still not a lot of people know about it. That's one of the main issues that I'm trying to put emphasis into and give my thoughts and suggestions on in my next presentation tomorrow. We still have a space there to reach out to the younger generation—not just in terms of age, but younger generations to get involved more in these spaces, especially people who don't really know about what we are doing. Hopefully, we as the NextGen here could help to spread the agenda of what ICANN is doing, the missions, and the goals. Hopefully more people will come and join this community. Thank you.

ALFREDO CALDERON

This is Alfredo Calderon again, mentor of the NextGen program and At-Large member. When I started in ICANN, the first meeting that I came to was as a newcomer. For those of you that don't know my professional background, I'm from the chemistry area; I'm a chemist and university professor in chemistry, so I'm really not a tech person. I felt that my voice needed to be heard due to the topics that were being covered within At-Large at that time, which was during the transition.

What I'm trying to point out is that we need, as part of the message that we do in the outreach process, to encourage people that feel that their voice—no matter from what field they come—can contribute to ICANN. People outside of ICANN sometimes feel that it's only a technical organization and that they can't contribute.

Within the actual NextGen group, we have a person that's from a sociology background and another one that's from a philosophical area. We need people like those to get involved because they bring perspectives that help us understand better how human rights can impact the policies that we developed. Diversity and inclusion is a factor that affects the underserved communities because they feel that their voice isn't heard and they don't have a mechanism to get involved because they're unaware of how they can contribute to the ecosystem of ICANN. Thank you.

ILHAM SUTOYO

It's Ilham again, NextGen fellow 85. I forgot to mention it, so I just want to give a suggestion or thought about one of the ways to reach a broader audience, especially from the university side. I am an elected council for the Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association. In our organization, we have spaces for formal partnerships with organizations, societies, or companies from everywhere in the world to hold activities or even online activities to introduce them to what they're really doing.

This could be one of the ways for ICANN to reach more people. It doesn't necessarily mean they will like it and join us straight away, but at least we spread the message about ICANN and what we are doing. Perhaps this message could be sent to someone who works in that area in ICANN. That's my suggestion. Thank you.

ROHAN SACHDEVA

Thank you. I am Rohan Sachdeva, NextGen fellow, and I also work at .au Domain Administration. I've also done programs like the Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy, both the regional and the Australian ones, and I was involved in organizing the program. From my perspective, the capacity-building programs are there. The problem is how we can keep the youth engaged. From a youth perspective, the world is now a lot more transactional, so you really expect some kind of outcome from your participation.

You do the Internet Governance Academy and you learn about things, but then you also have your main job. Maybe you are a lawyer. Then there's a disconnect for the friends I made from APIGA. They have their main job, but then they are not able to contribute to Internet governance. I understand you can still contribute, but for young people, I think it needs to be a more structured pathway. There is also a demographic shift. At the time when a lot of the older members in our community joined ICANN, the situation might have been different. For my friends and me, the economy is different now. We have to take two or three part-time jobs to make the same amount of living.

A lot of us have moved out of our houses. That's also what's going on in the youth mind. How do we keep both our priorities at the same time? We would like to contribute to Internet governance, but there's other priorities as well. I think we need to strike a right balance. Based on this, the NetMission.Asia organization and a consultative procedure at APIGA came up with a youth statement that was submitted to the WSIS+20 review. That called for a

structured youth representation. That was meant to be having a youth voice—not just symbolic, but where youth understands what the problems are.

Demographics and the economy are things playing at the same time. I think the other thing is we can reach out to a lot of university students and the youth, but at the end of the day, we can't bring all of them to a discussion table. Like in politics, everybody can have a say, but not everyone can be a politician. Thank you.

RAGINI KANUNGO

Thank you. I am Ragini Kanungo for the record, and I echo the opinions raised by the colleagues in this room. I would like to highlight two aspects here. From a personal experience point of view, I come from a non-technical background. To be honest, even I was not aware of ICANN and the work undertaken by ICANN prior to being associated with NIXI as an intern. I feel like the visibility of ICANN could be increased further. I can only speak for people from non-technical backgrounds because some of my friends from technical backgrounds did know about ICANN.

Non-technical people are probably still not so much aware of it. If we can somehow increase that outreach, we should focus on people from all backgrounds, irrespective of whether they are technical or non-technical. In addition to universities, we could also take a look at research institutes and think tanks working in this space because there are a lot of organizations that work in

similar spaces having an overlap of interests. Maybe some sort of a program or collaboration could be considered in the future.

The second point was with regards to sustained engagement in this space. There's always a full-time job that is undertaken, and then this continues more like a voluntary role. If some initiatives or measures can be taken to ensure that people who join this space continue in the longer run, it would be beneficial because the Internet is not going anywhere; it's here forever. Sustaining that and probably incentivizing engagement with ICANN could provide motivation. Each person who uses the Internet has a stake in ICANN, which is how this community has been built. I believe incentivizing it a little bit would encourage more people to express their opinions. Thank you.

SIVASUBRAMANIAN
MUTSUHANI

I wanted to continue on Andrew's comment about the age limit and attracting people with expertise. That could probably require ICANN to institute a different kind of fellowship program, maybe a Senior Fellow program, where you identify people in different sectors with expertise. You could invite people from space technologies, hotels, hospitals, doctors, or from the open-source community. You could invite them and keep a business-class program with travel and hotel, and maybe throw in a car for sightseeing on the weekend.

The fellowship director, together with specialized mentors, could engage them in a structured way. If they come and see ICANN,

they'll be very impressed and become dedicated participants. Regarding old participants who have been continuing for a long time, I have something positive to say. We need some kind of wisdom to prevail in ICANN, so the continuity of good long-term participants helps ICANN quite a lot.

BECKY NASH

Great. Thank you very much for your insights there. Again, our hope is to stay at the very strategic level of identifying what are the emerging trends and then having that dialogue about what we should do further for research and ensuring that we check the adequacy of our strategies in place.

We have approximately 15 minutes left in this session. We have two additional topics. This next one is an internal environmental trend or assumption related to ICANN's ecosystems, processes, and procedures. We've highlighted a few items here. It is not an exhaustive list, so if there are any other additional insights, please speak up. We've made the point that ICANN's policy processes are often perceived as complex and process-heavy, with few incentives for consensus and timely decision-making. This can be a deterrent to participation, especially by newcomers.

The community has expressed difficulties in finding volunteers willing to commit the time and resources to participate at ICANN. At the same time, the community's workload remains high and requires Supporting Organization and Advisory Committee groups to find a balance between outreach and onboarding of newcomers

with focusing on getting the work done. Those are two areas as it relates to complexity, onboarding newcomers, and ensuring that the policy work is done in a timely manner. Several stakeholder groups grapple with finding a balance between inclusivity and effectiveness.

While broad participation in ICANN's processes strengthens legitimacy and diversity of input, the increasingly large working groups addressing increasingly complex issues can slow progress and strain resources. This also has funding constraints and uneven stakeholder capacity and varying levels of policy expertise, particularly within civil society and among newer multi-stakeholder model participants. Finally, legitimacy is not measured by participation alone, but also by delivery: completing policy recommendations by the community, timely Board decisions, and effective implementation. How can ICANN strengthen its legitimacy not only through who participates, but through what it delivers and how effectively policies are implemented? Any comments about ICANN's ecosystem, processes, procedures, or complexity? Alfredo, please.

ALFREDO CALDERON

Alfredo Calderon for the record, mentor for the NextGen and member of the At-Large community. The demographics is an issue. Volunteers have full-time jobs, and they have to compete with being a volunteer. If you do research on the type of volunteers we have, you may notice that a majority are retired, so they have free

time. Others have a business interest in coming to the ICANN meetings, so they volunteer for some constituencies or some groups.

There are those that feel that the working groups have a charter that is so huge and broad that it takes so many issues into account that it makes it too complicated or takes a long time to reach consensus when we have multiple stakeholders involved. We need to figure out a way to segment the issue instead of broadening it. I'll give you a concrete example. Now with the new round of gTLD, we have an issue with the Latin diacritics. That eliminates the possibility of underserved communities whose language can't be included as applicants because there's a working group that hasn't finished a policy consultation to submit a comment to see if we can include that in the applicant guidebook.

It's not going to be included, and that defeats the purpose of this NextGen gTLD round. We're excluding a sector of the community because there's a working group that hasn't finished its report to tie it into the applicant guidebook. Thank you.

ANDREW CAMPLING

Hi. Andrew Campling for the record. This is a big question that would take a long time to answer properly, so one very small point: measure time. Hold groups to account on how long they take to do things and publish the time that's taken. I'm a great fan of the idea that you get what you measure. If you start to show that it's taken two and a half years to address something, that embarrassment

will hopefully drive some speed. As I say, there's a load of other things in there, but you want to do another thing in about five minutes.

SIVASUBRAMANIAN
MUTSUHANI

This is about strategic planning itself. I've seen governments and large organizations getting trapped in a plan. They have a one-year plan or a long-term plan, and the long-term plan says to do this. Quite related to the plan, there is a funding allocation for each planned item. Then the plan becomes irrelevant, but the tendency is to spend that money. When something comes up, it can't be done because it's not part of the plan and has not been planned for.

The strategic plan should probably have a static element and a dynamic element. A dynamic element could be fast-changing. In India, I think we had plan expenditure and non-plan expenditure, so there were planned programs and unplanned programs. Both should be part of strategic planning. I'm not supposed to use the word "should," so this is just a suggestion. Flexibility and responsiveness are needed. Nothing is set in stone, so that could be the way ICANN could change its thinking. This is in general on broad aspects. Thank you.

PATRICK KANE

Thanks very much. I really do appreciate this session. I've been reluctant to jump in many times because I didn't want my experience of being in this environment for a long time to curb any

of the enthusiasm and the ideas that were going around in the room. But one of the challenges with consensus building is that it is messy and it takes time. It's a deliberate process, and some people may call it slow, but it really is deliberate in terms of finding the right experience sets to help solve the right problems.

Within the ICANN environment, as an operator of .com within Verisign, much of this policy is implicated in changes to contractual requirements for registries and registrars. It is a very focused role within a thin layer, but a very important layer within the DNS. The governance of that layer is really where ICANN has found success. When we think about the technical coordination of unique identifiers, which is the primary task for ICANN, we've not had issues in 25 years. ICANN continues to do its job.

However, we need to evolve, as the participants in the room have identified, to bring in voices to learn and to contribute. I think the learning piece is what we miss sometimes. There's a catch-up process that has to take place so people can meaningfully participate. I don't think we do a very good job at that when we have newcomers. We don't have a concise view of where this policy came from, where this issue came from, and what's behind all that.

Everything that we've heard so far in this session has been really interesting in terms of the next set of problems that we have to solve or the next opportunities that we can take advantage of. We should take the enthusiasm within this room and drive outcomes that will be beneficial for the next generation of users of the

Internet. I'm encouraged by what I'm hearing, but I also recognize that we don't have the tools to catch people up in a timely fashion so they can become meaningful participants. We don't have to wait for a retired, experienced individual to contribute. We can get enthusiastic participants, as you have in the room there, and drive outcomes that are meaningful to everyone. Thank you.

BECKY NASH

Thank you very much for your perspective there; great insights. We've covered a lot of different dialogue today and discussion. Our next section is just "other," meaning a wide open call for any other external or internal trends based on your observations that you wanted to raise. We also know that the session is about to end. I will continue to say: please email us or reach out to us should you have any further insights after you do read our documentation that we provided, which is a briefing report.

We really want to appreciate and thank everybody for joining today. We definitely want to thank Amitabh for joining us as the chair of the Board Strategic Planning Committee. The next phase of this program is a way that ICANN together can keep the pulse on any topics that we really should evaluate as to whether there is a need to adjust the strategy or evolve our operating plan as it pertains to a strategy that we have in place. After these environmental scan sessions, the planning team will review and consolidate all of the input shared by all the participants.

We will then be providing summaries of the materials to the Board Strategic Planning Committee with the chair, Amitabh. The Board of ICANN has delegated the responsibility to the Board's Strategic Planning Committee to then evaluate any emerging trends and to develop recommendations to the Board on whether or not the strategies should change and/or whether or not some additional emphasis should be contemplated in the operating plan. On the screen right now, we're giving you the overall timeline for this process.

We expect that the analysis will be completed and presented and discussed by the Board by the end of July. Then the Board Strategic Planning Committee would make a recommendation to the Board of ICANN in the September timeline of whether or not there's an emerging trend that results in a change at this time, or will it be something that we continue to monitor and research for future years for the planning process. Thank you, everybody, very much, and we can close the session. Thanks again.

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