
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – Presenting the Functional Model for Root Server System Governance
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OZAN SAHIN

Hello and welcome to the, Presenting the Functional Model for Root Server System Governance session. My name is Ozan and I'm a participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, and the ICANN Community Anti-Arrestment Policy.

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BRAD VERD

Thank you, Ozan. Apologies for not being there. For personal reasons I could not make it, but I'm going to do my best here to convey what the GWG has done. And just really quick, obviously the GWG published this report and provided its deliverables to the ICANN board. Today this is an opportunity to socialize it during

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ICANN85 and I'm happy to take questions after I kind of run through it and explain it in more detail on basically how we got here.

As a quick reminder, ICANN Board is not going to act on the GWG report during or immediately after ICANN85. They just got it. So, with that, let's dive in. I put together some slides here. I'm going to run through a quick history of kind of how we got here and then we'll dive into the GWG work. So next slide, please. All right.

So, we're going to run through where this stems from, it came from RSSAC advice. We're going to talk through what happened after RSSAC delivered RSSAC037 to the board and then obviously the creation of the GWG and then the deliverables of the functional model.

So, next slide. So, first came the RSSAC advice. So, next slide. So, where did this all come from? So, this was how RSSAC037 started, which kind of kicked this all off and you can see it kicked it all off way back in 2015. During 2014, if we all remember, was the IANA stewardship transition began and that was very clear, showed the global engagement and the multi-stakeholder approach.

RSSAC, during that, because they were very much engaged in that stewardship transition, they recognized the need to kind of address a couple important issues that had been lingering in the RSO world. And those questions were, who's holding the RSOs accountable and for what? How are the RSOs ensuring continuity of service?

And who the stakeholders are. And so, in 2015, RSSAC kicked off the work that eventually resulted in RSSAC037. So next slide.

And this was the rough model delivered by RSSAC to the board. It identified stakeholders. It created a number of functions that they thought was necessary and it kind of really quickly went over on how things might work given those different functions. And next slide.

So, then there were recommendations given to the board. Recommendation one, obviously, initiate a community process to produce a final version of the model. Recommendation two was a costing effort. And recommendation number three was to implement that model. So RSSAC037 and RSSAC038 were delivered from RSSAC to the ICANN board as a package. Next slide. RSSAC, shortly after 37 got published and was with the board, RSSAC took the 11 principles that were in 37 and adopted them as principles for the root server system. Basically, took those 11 principles directly out of RSSAC037 and created its own document that they believed should live on and that became RSSAC055.

These are just principles like the internet requires a global unique public namespace. IANA is the source of the DNS root data. The root server system must be stable, reliable, resilient, and so forth. I don't need to repeat all these for you, but this is where RSSAC055 came from. It was a direct, it came directly from 37. Next slide.

The RSOs developed a document and so the RSOs developed a success criteria for a governance structure. And the RSOs got

together on their own, developed this, delivered it to RSSAC. RSSAC then adopted it and created RSSAC058. This success criteria basically was what the RSOs thought a proposed model should deliver on and it was based upon previous RSSAC work, but all the deliberations from the RSOs. And there were 65 criteria. You can see the breakdown there.

I think it is important to note and not get lost in all of this, is that the root server system is currently self-governed by the RSOs. This means that while there's no entity that the RSOs are governed by, each RSO works closely and collectively with each other to achieve expectations of the RSS that are responsible and meet the local jurisdictional laws.

So, then we now have RSSAC037, RSSAC055, RSSAC058. And 37, 38 delivered to the board. We go to the next slide. So, then this was given to the board, I think in 2019. Next slide, please. And it got stuck with the board for a bit. And the reason it got stuck with the board is because this went out of the normal boundaries or playbook of policy or governance development that ICANN had done.

This 37 required the engagement with the RSOs, which were not part of ICANN, and it required engagement with the IAB. And so, the board technical committee took that. They developed a concept paper that outlined the approach or how to respond to 37. That was then given to ICANN org and ICANN org went and

developed a charter and operating procedures based upon this concept paper.

And then the BTC, the Board Technical Committee, that was all put out for public comment. BTC reviewed all those comments and they proposed convening the GWG. All of that took about 18 months. The board then directed, obviously, the publication of the final charter operating procedures and kind of what the deliverable will be, which was the GWG shall develop a final model to inform the discussions and deliberations of the ICANN board in responding to RSSAC037. And determining next steps in the evolution of the RSS governance in conjunction with RSSAC and the RSS stakeholders. So that's the key sentence there in the charter. Next slide.

So, that was how we got to the creation of the GWG. It was chartered to develop a governance structure for the root server system, which will eventually formalize the relationships within that system. And so, next slide. All right, the composition.

So, the composition, this was based upon the consultation paper done by the BTC and obviously then the feedback of the public comment. And the members are comprised of all the root server operators, all 12 of them, the ccTLD registries through the ccNSO, the gTLD registries through the registry stakeholder group, SSAC, and the IETF.

And then there were three liaisons. We had liaisons to the ICANN board, we had liaisons to IANA, and the Root Zone Maintainer.

Called out here, this collection of stakeholders had never worked together before. As I said, this was a bit of a greenfield event here.

Next slide. All right, so these are the building blocks that I'm going to walk through. So, I've already walked through 37, 55 and 58 where they came from. I just covered where the governance working group, that came from the advice 37, 38 to the board. They called the consultation paper, which the result of that was the GWG.

So, the current deliverables from the GWG can be broken up into two different sets of documents. One is the governance principles and one is the actual model. The model is what's called out in our charter and what was in our remit to give back to the board. And in the process of trying to develop that, it was clear that, we, the GWG, had to take kind of a very deliberate approach to this. And, you know, while you look through what we're kind of trying to support here of the root server system, the RSOs manage the root in a deliberate fashion, cautiously to ensure you know, continued availability of the system.

And it's been successful now for over three decades. So, given that, we, the GWG, wanted to take that same approach so we took a very deliberate approach to develop a proposal for the development and possible implementation of the model. I think it is important, before I go much further, I just want to call this out. My guess is, I'll be coming back to this statement a number of times, which is the GWG was formed by the ICANN Board to present a model to the

ICANN Board and the community, which is what we're doing. We were not formed to implement the model. So, it's a key distinction there.

The development of these principles was an incredible key effort with the goal to define a set of tools that are to be used in building the foundation of the model and used to evolve that model. So, a majority of our time was spent on creating this tool set and in the governance principles, you'll see that, you know, if you read through them, a key thing there is we identify stakeholder communities, how they're identified by the eventual governance structure, and how they engage with the system. And then obviously we have the model. The model went out for public comment and then the deliverables that had been provided to the board.

Next slide. All right, so let's see, the report sets out a governance framework with multiple stages, okay? And moving from stage to stage, it's based on ensuring a bunch of major milestones are achieved based upon the agreement of the stakeholders within the governance structure. So, what this figure is trying to represent is the relationship of the GWG to the larger picture of getting to an implemented governance structure.

It became very clear early on in the GWG discussions that developing those tools and the governance principles couldn't be done without talking through how and when things might come into effect in the creation of this very deliberate implementation of

a governance structure over the RSS. And so, what you see here is where the GWG lives on the left side of the image, where the GWG pretty much disbands.

And then the document, we go further than just providing a model because all of our discussions around the implementation of that model informed the creation of those tools and what the structure would and could look like. So, we thought it was imperative to share a lot of the detail that was in our discussions on how we thought the implementation of this might work, again, in a safe and secure manner.

So, you can see between the first two boxes, you can see where the GWG gives its package to the ICANN Board and the community. The GWG is obviously there for feedback and questions and give responses on how we saw things working and whatnot as the board works through how to implement that. And then it's up to the board to go create, you know, what that implementation plan is. And this here is what we described goes above and beyond our remit, but we believe is very important because it informs the board with a starting point.

And then you can see, obviously the way the group talked about it, the way the GWG saw it as like there would be a commitment by the assenting parties to participate in this structure. There'd be a chartering process on creating what the charter would be for the RSS GS and then the GS entity can be formed. There's an initiation phase. I'll get into the details of each of these phases, but there's

an initiation phase, there's an establishment phase, and then there's the key milestones of going from the establishment phase to the governance phase, which might require things being amended at that point.

But this is an important picture, because I think what this picture shows and what we found out working through our discussions are deliberations in the GWG was the remit of the GWG was not necessarily in alignment with the expectations of people. Because a lot of people's questions and concerns were in the implementation phases and not necessarily in the functional model, which was the remit of the GWG. So, my guess is we'll come back to this picture, but next slide, please.

All right, let's get into the principles really quick and the functional model. Next slide. So, the principles, as I stated, this was a majority of the time that the GWG spent creating the guiding principles for the RSS intended to be used as the primary tool to create and modify the future governance structure. We broke those up into three different groups.

There was the separation and balance of powers, designation and removal of the RSOs, and finances. These are like overarching topics that really drove all of our discussions. So, the separation and balance of powers, these principles basically inform the allocation of powers and responsibilities among the various RSS stakeholders, again, the stakeholders that were identified in the principles.

The designation and removal principles, these principles were to be used by relevant participants in the governance structure to decide whether or not to designate an RSO or remove a designation from an RSO or to alter the number of RSOs. And then finances principles, these were to decide the levels of funding collected and allocated for the purposes of operating both the RSS and the supporting governance structure. So those are key distinct things to understand.

In the end, those principles, the GWG reached consensus on 52 principles. There are 20 in the separation and balance of powers, there's 17 in the designation and removal, and 15 on the finances piece. Okay, next slide.

The GS. All right, what makes up the GS? So, quite honestly, it's very simple and very similar to the document or the model that came out of the RSSAC037. There's a council composed of the participant stakeholder communities, which were identified as the root server operators, the ccTLD registries and the gTLD registries with those liaisons from the IANA, the IETF, and the Root Zone Maintainer.

The functions, again, right in line, there's a strategy, architecture, and policy, designation and removal functions, performance monitoring and evaluation, security incident reporting, and then finance and resource management. And then obviously there's the underlying secretariat function that's needed just to keep the train moving. Next slide.

Here's a visual representation of what I just went over. This provides the numbers of seats that were identified and this is all subject to change. Again, our principals call out clearly that the GS needs to be flexible and needs to evolve over time and while these seats might change, this is the starting point that the group identified. So, 12 seats for the RSOs, 12 seats for the Cs and Gs, broken six and six, and then the three seats for the liaisons. Those make up the council.

And then the council is responsible for the functions. Those functions can be made committees. It's up to the council and it's for the governance structure to govern itself once formed and figure out how they want to go about that. Let's see. Yeah, next slide. All right.

So, then we have the phases. So again, this is above and beyond the remit of the GWG, but this informed all the work we did. So, the group identified three phases. So, there's the initiation phase. I think it's important just to call this out and read it to everybody because I believe we're going to spend some time answering some questions here, which is establish the governance structure. This is the formation of the council and the secretariat while fostering voluntary participation amongst the stakeholders. So, this is literally light touch, no authority, create the governance structure based upon the stakeholders identified using those principles.

Then becomes the establishment phase and this is a bit of a heavy lifting phase. This is where the formalize the governance

mechanisms, including the creation of the core functions, stakeholder engagement processes, financial governance necessary for short, and to support the long-term governance and the long-term operation of the RSS. This is a real heavy lifting phase, but again, the GWG believed that the newly formed GS should be governing that and creating a lot of those details.

And then lastly, and we identify a number of key milestones to move from the establishment, again, the establishment phase is still no authority. It's just developing all these governance mechanisms, but there's no authority to really act on them until it switches over to the governance phase. And there's key milestones that have to be achieved and decisions made to switch from the establishment phase to the governance phase. And when you go to the governance phase, obviously that activates the full decision-making and operational authority of this governance structure, ensuring long-term sustainability and adaptability. Those are the three phases. So, let's go to the next slide.

All right, so this is a visual representation of the last couple slides that I went through, and I'm going to walk through it again here really quick. You can see the bottom is the foundational principles, right? These are the governance principles of the RSS GS. Foundational principles for the governance of the root server system. Again, I apologize, but it's important, I'm just going to read this. Guiding principles for the RSS intend to be used as the primary tool by the body creating, and don't forget, so this is the evolution,

or modifying the governance structure to validate and confirm with the governance structure and any future changes to it.

Second piece, the GWG functional model, which has now been delivered to the board and the community, this defines the RSS GS stakeholders and the proposed approach to the governance structure. You can see this group of people here and the checkbox here. This is the you are here part of the map. This is where we are today. So, the model and the principles have been delivered to the board and the community, and it's being mulled over and considered.

If there is a decision to move forward, then you can see, as I stated earlier, there's the formation of the RSS GS, and it's three phases. Again, the initiation phase, the formation of the council and the secretariat, development of kind of charters and some rudimentary procedures. The document goes into some detail on that. Then there's the establishment phase. Again, the formalization of the functions, the membership criteria and other governance documents on how they work, how they interact, the requirements. And then lastly, the governance phase, which is where the RSS governance is operationalized and there's a feedback loop. So that is the visual representation of where we are today.

So, I think it's important to understand that, you know, each stage would be completed before performance standards are developed and the agreement reached on whether a poorly performing root were subject to removal or if there was ideas for something being

added. These are all things that the group spent a significant amount of time talking on.

I think to maybe preempt some of the questions, one of the questions that I expect to get is, this report does not establish the process for removing an RSO. If approved all the stakeholders as stated earlier, they have to govern themselves, the RSOs, the Cs and the Gs at the initial outset. They'll have voting seats on the council and a voice in the future development of performance standards and the scoping of the future designation and or removal or expansion of the RSO set.

And I think that covers the high-level overview. Carlos, I'm not monitoring the chat, so if you can let me know if there's anything in there, but I did all that in 30 minutes. It was a lot to take in. I think that's the last slide. Is that right, Carlos or Ozan?

CARLOS REYES

Correct, and there's nothing in the chat.

BRAD VERD

Great, okay. So, I will open it up to questions. And there are a number of GWG members here that can keep me honest, as I don't remember all the content of the document. I will do my best to address any questions.

OZAN SAHIN

Hi, Brad, this is Ozan, managing the remote participation. There is now a question in the chat box. I'm reading it and this is from Monika Ermert: is there an expectation that not all RSOs will assent? What would that mean, or will assenting become obligatory?

BRAD VERD

Interesting question. Again, this was not part of the remit or the deliverables of the GWG. The group worked very hard to make the model flexible enough and with the ability to change if needed to address concerns like this, but this was not specifically addressed and isn't meant to be. This would be a consideration by the board and through its chartering efforts to address when that happened. Any other questions?

OZAN SAHIN

No other questions at this time. There is a question in the room now.

ONDREJ FILIP

Ondrej Filip from CZ.NIC, hello. I just saw the structure you kind of proposed and there is 12 seats for the root server operators. Is it tied with the current number of the root server operators and does it mean that it can change in the future? I'm not proposing that. For example, whereas I would get rid of one of that, transfer to another company or two root server operators would merge,

whatever can happen in the future, I mean, is it tied with the number of the root server operators or is it just numbers 12 as it is?

BRAD VERD

Yeah, I appreciate the question. Yeah, currently and I think as I stated when we went through this slide, this is based upon the current number of RSOs and the principles as I stated earlier, we spent a lot of time making sure that this was flexible and that the council can make changes going forward. Once the governance structure is put in a place, they would be the authority for making those decisions based upon any changes that might or might not occur to the number of RSOs.

ONDREJ FILIP

So, a very quick follow-up, does it mean that every RSO will nominate two persons and that's it for the beginning at least? Sorry, one person.

BRAD VERD

It's one, yeah, one. I mean that was the minimum that the GWG saw. There were a lot of discussions, much like having an alternate and whatnot, but those were in the weeds implementation details that weren't necessary for creating a functional model. And we left those details to the GS once it was stood up.

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE

Yeah. Oh, thank you very much. This is Abdulkarim. I first of all want to thank you for this presentation because I think I was able to understand some things, especially in the context of the working group, the RSSAC001. So, I wanted to find out, because you mentioned the fact that this has been presented to some stakeholders, I'm not sure which of the communities this presentation has been presented to. Then also in terms of the council, is there no way in which probably like end users can be included? Thank you.

BRAD VERD

So, I think your first part of the question, as far as end users in going through the principles, the idea in the beginning, again, the actual initiation establishment and ultimately moving into the governance phase, it was identifying the stakeholder communities and those that were identified were the ones in front of you.

The principles call out every which way that you can think of, full transparency and engagement with the community via public comment and whatnot. But there are key principles that call out kind of the bar or what it takes to become a stakeholder community itself and have engagement there. So, it's very clear in the principles and the model allows for the council that if well-formed and mature groups developed and want to become stakeholder communities going forward, that they can seek that via the council.

And oh, as far as where this has been presented, this is the first time this slide deck has been shared to a larger audience. So, I'm not sure what you were referencing about being shared, but this is the first time the GWG itself has openly shared this sort of public comment and talking to the board.

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE

Okay, I was thinking if it can be shared with the RSSAC Caucus.

BRAD VERD

I have no objection. This is now a public document.

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE

Thank you.

OZAN SAHIN

Hi, Brad. There are a few more questions in the chat. I'm reading the first one, another one from Monika. Can you also explain what assent will mean? Does it mean signing some sort of contract?

BRAD VERD

Well, I think in -- can we go to slide 14? I think is what she's referring to. So, this was a commitment by the assenting parties. Assenting means agree to participate, really nothing more. And what is not part of, and I think this is important to understand the distinction and again, a topic that the GWG spent a lot of time talking through and kind of figuring out what the balance is, it was not the GWG's

remit to develop what we referred to internally as constitutional documents or contracts or, you know, whatever those might be. That has to happen down the road.

But yes, the thought process is that assenting in this box right here means just agree to participate because in order to create the GS or instantiate it for the initiation phase, the identified stakeholder communities have to agree to participate. That's the first step. Then obviously there's the chartering. And then the move from the establishment to the governance phase is, I think maybe what you're referring to where there would have to be agreements of some kind. And again, this was out of the remit of the GWG. I hope that answered the question.

OZAN SAHIN

Thank you, Brad. This is Ozan again. I'm reading the next question in the chat from Andrew. Looking at the stakeholder communities, is there a reason that resolver operators are not included? Could they be added in the future?

BRAD VERD

Yes, they can to be very clear. I'll say it over and over again. There is a clear approach in the principles document on what it takes to become a stakeholder community. Resolvers were talked about extensively in the GWG since they are the main interaction for the RSS to the users. But yes, they can be added as a stakeholder

community in the future. They did not meet the requirements right now and trying to get this off the ground.

OZAN SAHIN

Thank you, Brad. This is Ozan again. I'm reading the next question. This one from Balakrishnan. Does India have any seat reservation in RSO or ccTLD?

BRAD VERD

Well, yeah, India has a country code so I imagine, I don't know for certain, I'm not an expert at this, I'm not an expert as the ccNSO, but I believe that they're a member of the ccNSO.

OZAN SAHIN

Please go ahead, Peter.

PETER KOCH

Peter Koch, DENIC and one of the two appointees from the ccTLD community in the working group. I think, Brad, we could amend that response by saying that, first of all, how the appointees are sent by the respective stakeholder groups is to be determined. And without preempting what I just said, I'd note that when there is an ask about India, I think the requester was trying to refer to the government or the country of India. And as such, there is no such seat, which is also true for the other countries because there's ccTLDs and the ccNSO and beyond. And the ccNSO will have a way to appoint people to this committee and the question what

particular had they are wearing is again part of the discussion like working under instructions usually in in in their capacity as ccTLD managers.

But to the best of my knowledge the ccTLD for India or any one of them, they're 14 or more, it's not the government. So, there's nothing that is prefilled right now, right? Thank you.

BRAD VERD

Thank you, Peter. As I said, thanks for keeping me honest. Any other questions?

OZAN SAHIN

We have one more in-room question. Please, go ahead.

ONDREJ FILIP

Hello, Ondrej Filip. Again, I hope I didn't miss the information, but who is going to finance the secretariat of the council?

BRAD VERD

Well, the document calls out a number of times finances. It's identified as a risk because it was a large topic of discussion with the GWG. The principals call out the need for financing and predictable financing. I will say that at one point, Tripti at the ICANN Board said, where financing comes from was not something for the GWG to solve. That was something for ICANN to solve and that was the answer that we worked on or worked with. So, that's a question for ICANN, but financing is called out very specifically a

number of times. There's a whole section in one of the appendices that calls out as a risk that needs to be resolved. Any more questions?

SAMANTHA EISNER

Thanks, Brad and this is Sam Eisner from ICANN. I've been working with the GWG, and one of the things you'll see about the initiation phase is that there's an agreement that it will start off within ICANN. So, we contemplate, you know, if the board accepts the GWG proposal, the initial phase at least will be, you know, much like you see other groups within ICANN. So that initial support would come from ICANN and ICANN staff. It's not foretelling what happens in the future, but the start is now, and then we'd see other proposals as we go through the phases that Brad took us through.

BRAD VERD

Yeah, thanks Sam. Again, thanks for keeping me honest. I think it's the initiation and the establishment phase are under the ICANN umbrella and then there is a decision, a key milestone that needs to be made from going from establishment to governance on whether or not if it stays there. Anything further?

OZAN SAHIN

Yes, this is Ozan. So, the next question in the chat is again from Monika. Given the potential to redesignate RSOs, do you expect many knocks on the door from other regions to get their RSOs?

BRAD VERD

Again, the development, the report, the model that was given does not establish a process for removing an RSO or adding an RSO. It does give the authority eventually in the governance phase to the stakeholder communities, the RSOs, again, at this time, which are the RSOs, the Cs and the Gs, all having a voting seat on the council and a voice in the future development of the performance standards and the scoping of future designation and or removal. So that tells how to get there, but it does not say how the council might do it. Any other questions?

OZAN SAHIN

There's a hand from Hans Petter.

BRAD VERD

Yeah, go ahead.

HANS PETTER HOLEN

Yeah, thank you. So, whenever this question comes up, I just want to point to the facts that while there are only 12 root server operators, there are according to the rootservers.org, more than 2,000 instances of root servers that are well distributed across the globe. So, from an operational point of view, the coverage of root servers across the entire globe is pretty solid. Of course, there is room for more coverage and several of the root server operators have programs for that. So, having a root server operator from a specific region does not necessarily have a strong operational

impact. Which is kind of on the side of the governance system, but I just want to inject that whenever this question comes up.

BRAD VERD

Thank you, Hans. All right. Any more questions?

OZAN SAHIN

No more questions at this time.

BRAD VERD

Shall we give it a couple seconds here? I would like to thank everybody for their participation. I want to thank the GWG and the board and everybody who has worked on this. This has been a big effort. I believe the documents speak for themselves and yeah, I'd just like to thank everybody's contribution to getting here.

OZAN SAHIN

Brad, this is Ozan. There's one more question in the chat now from Desiree. What might trigger a removal only triggered by the RSO or the council?

BRAD VERD

Again, I think a number of different ways to look at that, but the GWG didn't get into the specifics of the performance metrics around, say, an RSO. That has to be defined by the council. We talked about the need for it and the proposed model makes an RSO control of root server is the -- I'm trying to think of, yeah, we didn't

get into that. It's the RSOs are independent, but once they move into this governance structure, there would be the expectation of a contract with SLAs, and that would lead to a removal or could lead to a breach, could lead to a removal. All that is talked about in the document.

There is a principle, or no, I'm sorry, in the document, it talked about voluntary resignation, that's all possible. And if there are other ideas, again, on how an RSO should be added or why they should be added, again, the GWG made it clear that the governance structure needed to be flexible and could be amended going forward to accommodate something that came up. Any other questions? I think we have 10 minutes left.

OZAN SAHIN

This is Ozan. I don't see any other questions or hands at the moment.

BRAD VERD

Well, if nothing else -- all right, we'll give it like 10 or 15 seconds here. There's always somebody late to the buzzer.

OZAN SAHIN

Okay, hand from Liman.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN

Yeah. Actually, not a question, not a comment. Since we are at this point, I, as a member of the GWG, I would like to thank Brad for his relentless work with driving this forward.

BRAD VERD

Thank you.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN

And I would also like to thank both ICANN for supporting this and ICANN staff for helping us out because they have pulled a heavy train in fixing these documents and helping us with meetings and whatnot. This has been a very heavy and tough effort. So, thank you very much.

BRAD VERD

Yeah, no doubt. I definitely echo all of that, ICANN staff and ICANN itself, thank you. All right. With that, there's nothing else. Again, I thank everybody for coming. Thanks for your input and we are adjourned. Thank you.

OZAN SAHIN

Please stop the recording.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]