
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – GAC Operations Discussion
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JULIA CHARVOLEN

Welcome to the GAC HLG discussion session on Sunday, 08 March at 03:00 PM local time. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, ICANN Community Code of Conduct, and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. Please remember to state your name and the language you will speak in case you will be speaking a language other than English. Speak clearly and at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation, and please make sure to mute all other devices when you are speaking. With that, I will leave the floor over to Nicolas Caballero, GAC Chair. Thank you, and over to you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much, Julia. Welcome back, everyone. I really hope you enjoyed your coffee or your tea. Fantastic tea in India indeed.

I have at this point the distinct privilege to introduce you to our speakers today. We are going to have Jorge Cancio from Switzerland, one of our vice chairs, joining us online. To my left, we have Baher Esmat from the ICANN GSE team. We have Janis Karklins from the ICANN GE team and, by the way, a former GAC Chair. Please correct me if I am wrong, Janis, but you were the third GAC Chair in history, so to say. Is that correct? We also have Einas

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Alshaikh Alshaikh from the Regulatory Authority of Oman. We are going to be talking about the next HLGM with her and with you, of course, and with everybody online. We have Fabien Betremieux from GAC Support.

If you can move to the next slide, please. This is just a quick overview of the agenda. We have the objectives of an HLGM, standing for High Level Governmental Meeting. A presentation of the ICANN87 HLGM meeting, followed by a discussion on HLGM agenda topics. We will also have an overview of the HLGM planning process, hopefully a shorter conversation in that case, and then the next steps and a call to action by you, distinguished GAC representatives. So without further ado, let me give the floor at this point to Jorge Cancio who is joining us online. Jorge, I can see you, so the floor is yours. Please go ahead.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Nico. Thank you for the introduction. This is Jorge Cancio, GAC Vice Chair and representative for Switzerland.

Just here on this slide, you have an overview of how the High Level Governmental Meeting fits with the GAC Strategic Plan, which is our basis for a lot of our work. As you see, and it is highlighted in yellow, there are different factors where the High Level Governmental Meeting fits with the Strategic Plan, be it with improving the understanding of the role of governments within the ICANN ecosystem, and of course, for senior levels of governments, the HLGM is a very good opportunity to do that. It is also an opportunity

to discuss high-level topics, and we will get later onto the possible topics of the agenda. It is also an opportunity to reach out to non-represented governments in the GAC. As we saw yesterday, we are still ten countries short of the full list of countries in the UN. There are also some countries that are formally represented in the GAC but have no specific representatives identified nowadays.

That is the connection with the Strategic Plan. If we go to the next slide, we can also recall the guidelines for High Level Governmental Meetings that were developed in 2015 and 2016. These go in a very similar direction as the Strategic Plan, reaffirming the critical role of governments within ICANN regarding the stable functioning of the DNS. They expose very senior officials to ICANN, discuss current public policy issues at a senior level, and reach out to administrations and governments that are not active in the GAC or in other ICANN fora. This is more or less the baseline for the strategic objectives of having a High Level Governmental Meeting. As you know, we are very fortunate to have the offer from our colleagues from Oman. As I understand, Einas is on the podium. I think we could go over to the presentation by Einas, which is much more interesting than recalling the objectives of a High Level Governmental Meeting. I will pass the floor directly to Einas, unless Nico you have thoughts.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

No, fine. Thank you so much, Switzerland. I have already introduced Einas, so the floor is all yours. Please go ahead.

EINAS ALSHAIKH ALSHAIKH

Hello, everyone. This is Einas for the record. First of all, I would like to thank ICANN for giving us this opportunity to host this very important event in Oman. If you can just move to the next slide, please. This is an overview of Oman and the different sceneries and places you can visit. I highly recommend for those of you who will be attending the ICANN event to please spend an extra couple of days to explore Oman.

Next slide, please. In terms of Oman's portfolio in hosting international events, Oman does have the experience and we also have very good facilities. We meet ICANN's criteria for the venue and we are more than capable to host a High Level Governmental Meeting. Oman has a strategic location in the middle of East and West, and Europe and Asia. We have hosted several events in technology, oil and gas, and cultural events. If you can move to the next slide, please. I want to assure everybody we are capable and able to fill the requirements of hosting this event.

We have proposed an agenda for the high-level participants. Of course, the meeting will, as per the discussion we had with the GAC team, be held on the Sunday, which is the day before the opening ceremony. We are also hoping that they would stay for the opening ceremony because we have a nice Omani cultural event planned on that day. We are also planning to host either a VIP lunch or a dinner on the first day for them, so we are working on preparing a very nice program for the high-level delegates. I think there was another

topic of discussing the potential agenda items, but that will be discussed later. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much, Einas. Back to you, Jorge.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you so much, Nico, and thank you so much, Einas. I am really looking forward to traveling to Muscat. We pass to the next topic of today's agenda. Einas already touched on this, which is what should be the High Level Governmental Meeting agenda topics. Today we have an opportunity for a first discussion. As I understand, Einas will elaborate on some of the ideas they have been thinking about for the agenda, and then we will have Janis with additional ideas from the ICANN org side.

In any case, as you see on this slide, these High Level Governmental Meeting agenda topics should be high level and should not dwell on technical issues. They should be related to relevant and current political challenges, opportunities, or processes. Finally, there should be a connection with ICANN's mission. Even if it is not necessarily an ICANN initiative or policy discussion itself, there should be a connection, because otherwise we miss the point of attracting senior officials to understand what it is about when we meet in ICANN meetings. I will pass the floor back to Einas for the topics our prospective host is thinking about.

EINAS ALSHAIKH ALSHAIKH

Thank you. We have discussed it internally and came up with a few ideas. We are very happy to hear from you because you have more experience in hosting these events, but I think one of the most important topics that should be discussed or promoted during this meeting is enhancing ICANN's role in the region. Many neighboring countries are not very aware of ICANN's scope, and this is a good opportunity for ICANN to promote its importance within the region. Another idea we have in mind is promoting internet access. This is related to the discussion regarding expanding affordable, secure, and resilient internet within the region. Bringing together all the high-level delegates is a good opportunity to discuss these issues and find suitable solutions for the future of the internet. We will have a strategic dialogue on emerging challenges and opportunities shaping the future of the internet, including cybersecurity, innovation, and evolving technologies. Last but not least, we would like to elevate Oman's presence on the international stage. Hosting such an event will be very beneficial for us. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much, Einas. Switzerland, Jorge, I do not know if you have anything to add at this point before I give the floor to Janis?

JORGE CANCIO

Please go ahead.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

All right. Assuming there are no questions at this point, I do not see any hand up in the room or online. Janis, the floor is yours. Please go ahead.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you, Nico. Hello, everyone. It is nice to be back on the GAC stage. It brings back some memories. More seriously, at the outset, I would like to say that these should not be seen as ICANN org proposals. These are simply some ideas that would stimulate the conversation in the GAC on the potential topics that could be addressed during the high-level meeting. It is entirely a decision of the Government Advisory Committee what to put on the agenda of intergovernmental conversation in this advisory committee. In addition to what Omani hosts had in mind, I would like to add a few more topics. One is about the multi-stakeholder governance model. Looking retrospectively for three decades, ICANN soon will celebrate thirty years of existence. We could discuss what were the key successes in promoting that model and how we would like to shape one of the most important stages for those who are involved in internet governance, the IGF, already now as a UN permanent forum. We can also discuss how GAC could participate better and more effectively both in ICANN processes and in global internet governance conversation.

Another topic that you may want to consider is universal acceptance. GAC is following this topic very closely. The angle that

might be interesting for ministers is how to move from saying that something needs to be done to concrete actions, maybe even with objectives to reach a bigger percentage than it is today. Since the event might attract ministers from developing countries, one of the topics that could be considered is how ICANN could contribute to capacity building on the issues that fall within the remit of ICANN. Again, these topics do not necessarily have to be on the agenda, but you may consider and choose from the catalog to propose that agenda.

Probably the number of topics that the high-level meeting will examine will depend a little bit on the room where the meeting will take place, whether that will be only a plenary setting or if there will also be some breakout rooms followed by reporting back to the plenary. In principle, for the moment, as I understand, the day's conversation would easily allow conversation on three or four topics during the high-level meeting. I am looking forward to the conversation and the reaction of the GAC members on all proposals that are on the table, or any new ideas that could be considered in the preparations for the meeting. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much for that, Janis. Rest assured that we will have enough time to discuss not only now but also intersessionally, and if need be, via Zoom calls in order to find the right topics for discussion and any other details you would like to discuss. But given the fact that we are here face-to-face and we have our

distinguished colleague representing Oman, this is a very good opportunity to brainstorm. This is not mandatory, but these are just some ideas to start the conversation. You are more than welcome to provide any good idea, any other topic, or to build on what is already written there. The more ideas, the better. Maybe not more topics because we won't have enough time to discuss ten or fifteen different things, but this is a good opportunity to brainstorm about at least these three topics you have on the screen today. I do not see hands online, but I see one hand in the room. Tracy, please go ahead.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Thank you, Chair. Tracy Hackshaw, UPU. I am not sure if it is in the current layout, but perhaps a topic on security and stability of the internet itself might fit into this given everything that is happening. I do not know if it is covered there, but maybe a line on that might be something governments in the regions would want to discuss. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much, UPU. I am sure you are referring to security at a very high level. We are not going to get into details of the binary components, DNSSEC, and cryptography. You mean talking about the high level? Okay. Thank you so much, UPU. I have a couple of hands. I have Egypt online. Please go ahead, Christine.

CHRISTINE ARIDA

Thank you, Nico. Sorry, I lost my video. Thank you, Einas, for the presentation and for the topics proposed. Also, thank you to Janis. I do not have much to add to the topics. I just wanted to say that what Janis proposed of having parallel tracks or focus groups on specific topics is a novel idea that is worth exploring. It would make the discussion more focused, warmer, and very useful. I just wanted to support that as an initial idea we can look into. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much, Egypt. Well noted. Rest assured that we are writing down everything mentioned here. The session is being recorded, so we will include your ideas. The floor is still open. Any other idea or suggestion? Australia?

IAN SHELDON

Thanks, Nico. Ian Sheldon, GAC Australia. I wonder how much attention we can provide on using this opportunity to build out bilaterals, both across the GAC as well as bilaterals with the rest of the ICANN community. If we are asking seniors to travel a very long way, let's make use of that opportunity and find a way to facilitate that community connection. I do not know if it has been much of a focus in previous HLGs, but it strikes me that one of the core things governments are interested in is bilateral engagements with each other to come and talk about internet issues. Perhaps it is

something we can build out and consider in the planning for this session.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much for that, Australia. The floor is still open. Baher, Janis, and Einas, feel free to chime in. I just want to make sure that our distinguished GAC representatives know the floor is still open for suggestions on additional topics for GAC discussion during the HLGM in Oman. These are preliminary considerations and we are in the brainstorming phase. I see no hands online or in the room. I was supposed to give the floor to Fabien. My apologies. You are more than welcome to chime in and give whatever opinion you might have at this point. Fabien, over to you.

FABIEN BETREMIEUX

Thank you, Nico. This is Fabien Betremieux from the GAC Support team. As you may understand by now, organizing an HLGM is a collaboration between the GAC, the host country, and ICANN org. Within ICANN org, this involves the GAC Support team, the GE team, and the GSE team to ensure that we reach out to all GAC delegations and provide an opportunity for them to nominate the relevant high-level invitees in each of your governments to participate in the HLGM. This is one of the first actions we are going to request from GAC members. We are starting this process today, and you will receive a communication. I will provide a bit more detail afterwards.

In parallel to building the agenda, we expect to discuss the topics. We will organize a webinar by early April to iterate on those proposed topics in order to build at least a preliminary agenda that would be ready for sending as part of the invitations to your ministers, heads of regulators, or any high-level invitees you deem appropriate. Between now and the end of April, we are going to work on those two processes in parallel with the objective to be ready by the end of April at the latest to send invitations. Those invitations would be sent by the host country, Oman, through the relevant minister to all those contacts that you would provide. This is a critical process to enable the organization of the HLGM.

Once invitations are sent, we will be able to finalize the last details of the agenda, including who would be moderators, speakers, and panelists. We will provide those opportunities for your high-level invitees to take part in the event. This will shape up progressively after the invitations are sent. Our objective is that with those invitations sent by the end of April, we will already have a good sense of confirmation by the time we meet for ICANN86. Ideally, before the summer, we will have a good sense of a final agenda and confirmations, but obviously we would continue working to ensure confirmation of participation throughout until the event. Nico, I see a hand up, so I might pause here.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

I have Lebanon online. Zeina, please go ahead.

ZEINA BOU HARB

Good morning, everyone. This is Zeina Bou Harb, the alternate GAC representative from Lebanon. I just wanted to stress the importance of taking advantage of the location of this HLGGM to enhance the engagement of the governments from our region in the work of ICANN. I would propose to our hosts in Oman to do a regional preparation prior to the event, maybe to consult GAC delegates from the region on the topics that are really relevant and reflect them on the agenda of the HLGGM. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Lebanon. Well noted. Would you like to say anything in that regard, Einas?

EINAS ALSHAIKH ALSHAIKH

Thank you. I think that is a very good proposal. We have to be aligned as a region to focus on the areas that we all agree on. I think that would be a good idea. Thank you, Zeina.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much. Before I give you the floor, Fabien, can we go back to slide number eight? Argentina, bear with me one second. I just wanted to make sure that we all agree on a preliminary basis. Is everybody okay with these preliminary topics for the HLGGM? Are there any hard feelings regarding the topics we have included there? I just want to make sure we are on the same page. Of course, we will have time to discuss this intersessionally via Zoom calls and

so forth. Does any distinguished GAC delegate have a problem with the topics on the screen at this point? This would be a very good moment to raise your hand. I have Trinidad and Tobago.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Thank you, Nico. Karel Douglas, Trinidad and Tobago. Firstly, I have no problem with the agenda; it looks pretty good. I was only going to ask whether or not, having regard to the last HLG, there were any agenda items from that meeting that would feature in this meeting, maybe as action items. Even though that is not a standing committee, there may have been some items that would be useful to have on this agenda. I only mention that as something to consider. It is not a hard recommendation, just a consideration. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much for that, Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Karel. Interesting. I did not think of that, but that is the beauty of these meetings. You can have many good ideas on the spot. So thank you for that. Any other? We are basically okay with it so far, and we are going to have more than enough time to fine-tune the topics. Sorry to keep you waiting, Argentina. Please go ahead.

MARINA FLEGO EIRAS

Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is Marina Flego Eiras, Argentina, for the record. Thank you very much for this truly informative session. I have a question related to the level of participation. I see that there

is a high-level meeting, and I am wondering if both ICANN and the organizers forecast providing any kind of financial support to assure that delegations from different countries are able to attend. What are the expectations as regards the number of the delegations? Do you expect a delegation of two or three ministers, or just one? Thank you very much.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you for the question, Argentina. Right off the bat, I can tell you that yes, there is financial support for it up to a certain level. My understanding based on the last HLG in Rwanda is that support is for ministers and vice ministers, provided they actually require it. I stand to be corrected, as I am not in charge of the financials within ICANN. Fabien, can you go ahead with this?

FABIEN BETREMIEUX

I was just going to confirm that there is generally, in addition to the usual ICANN meeting travel support program, a specific HLG travel assistance program. The exact numbers and scope remain to be finalized. We will define and communicate that in due time. That will fit into our timeline in the period after the invitations. That is when we will have all the details and we will get into the concrete planning of those aspects. It is indeed planned. As for your question about the size of delegations, I certainly do not want to speak for the host country, which may have specific suggestions. In our process to collect the designations of high-level invitees, we invite nominations of up to four high-level invitees potentially. If you

have more, you can reach out to us and we can certainly accommodate that on the intake side. We will figure out at the time of invitation whether there are any constraints or not. At this time, we are not aware of any. Hopefully that answers your questions.

MARINA FLEGO EIRAS

Yes, thank you very much.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you again, Argentina, for the question. As a rule of thumb, we work on averages. Some delegations come with one minister or one vice minister. Some others come with four members. In general, we are talking about averages. It is not written in stone that you should come with four, say the minister, vice minister, and two attachés. But thank you for the question, an important detail indeed. I have Lourino.

LOURINO CHEMANE

I am Lourino Chemane from Mozambique. I will be speaking in Portuguese for the sake of translation. I would like to propose another issue. Mozambique has a great concern in other international forums regarding the DNS, cybersecurity, and the UN convention signed last October. What could this forum do? There are many risks for new generations due to algorithms and Artificial Intelligence. Would you like to include this as a specific proposal?

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Can you please do it in writing? Send it to us in writing, please. Thank you. There was the lady over there. Please go ahead. Sorry, I cannot recognize your country. Nigeria. I am so sorry. I cannot see the nameplate.

AMINA RAMALLAN

Hello, everyone. This is Amina Ramallan from Nigeria. I just wanted to ask about the possibility of further promoting internet access. I see it talks about bridging the digital divide and promoting internet access. I do not know if it is possible for us to touch a bit on internet shutdowns. A lot of countries are experiencing internet shutdowns at this point. If we want to talk about promoting internet access, we need to also look at these shutdowns and why they are happening, since we have some of the decision-makers in the room. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Nigeria. Very good point indeed. Maybe we can include that in the discussion about internet access. Thank you so much, Nigeria. I have Libya next.

KHALED ALTARHUNI

Hello, everyone. My name is Khaled, GAC Libya. First, I support Tracy's idea to add a high-level security and stability topic to the agenda. Since AI is the hot topic, I propose discussing security and stability through AI. AI is an important topic, I guess. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Libya. So if I understand correctly, you would like to include AI or machine learning technologies as related to DNS security and stability? Is that what you are suggesting? Okay. Thank you so much, Libya. Well noted. The floor is still open. I have a hand from the European Commission. Gemma, please go ahead.

GEMMA CAROLILLO

Thank you very much, Nico. I hope you can hear and see me correctly because there was an issue with the camera earlier on. I want to say that the program looks promising and congratulations for the presentations from the colleagues from Oman; this is much appreciated. I have a question which frankly has been in the back of my mind for the whole of the session. I believe it is good that if there is an answer, we get it now. Is there a contingency plan in case we are, for any reason, not able to hold the ICANN meeting in Oman like what happened last year? Since for the HLG we are asked to engage at a very high level in governments, and as everybody knows, that takes time, we should really try to do it early on. Of course, I am really hoping that all goes according to plan, but we have the experience of last year where unfortunately this was not possible. I was wondering whether there is any information because we will be asked. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT

Thank you for the question. This is Baher Esmat for the record. At this point, our plans for ICANN87 in Oman remain unchanged. At the same time, we are monitoring the situation closely. We are

coordinating with the local host in Oman. Of course, if any changes come up, we will make sure to keep the GAC and the ICANN community informed in due time. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you for the question, European Commission. Thank you, Baher, for the answer. The other thing is that we always have a plan B, rest assured. Especially GAC leadership, that is for sure. That is for granted. But we are crossing our fingers that everything will be fine and we will have the chance to enjoy the beauty of Oman and have a fantastic session there. Before I give the floor back to Fabien for some housekeeping details, we still have the chance to brainstorm a little bit. My gut feeling at this point is that we actually will need to narrow down a little bit because so far I see seven topics. It depends on how we organize the sessions. We do not need to discuss all the topics during one session. We can divide it into two or three sessions. But again, your ideas are more than welcome. The floor is still open for contributions. If not, let me hand the floor back to Fabien.

FABIEN BETREMIEUX

Nico, on the development of the agenda, I think we see this as an iterative process. Today we have been collecting a number of ideas that we will work on together with the host, the GAC leadership, and the various teams involved at ICANN. We will put those into an initial proposal that we will share with the GAC, seek additional input, organize that webinar in early April, and use that as the next

step. Eventually we will get to a place where we can send invitations and then continue to iterate to get to a final agenda with a moderator, panelists, speakers, et cetera. This is going to be a process over the next several months.

What I would like to leave everybody with is a call to action for GAC members. On the agenda, I have mentioned that there will be opportunities and we will send updates and seek comments. If at any point you are interested to contribute ideas, you can do that on the GAC mailing list. We will be in touch regarding the development of the agenda. Now let me go back to the top of the slide, which is for the designation of high-level invitees. We invite you to start providing those to us through a form that we have created. You have the link here on the slide, and we will send a communication to the GAC mailing list with all those details. We suggest using a form so that it is more practical and effective for us to process. It should be a very straightforward form where we ask you to nominate up to four high-level invitees' contact information. One is mandatory. Obviously we need at least one, but up to four. We will also invite you to identify who around those high-level invitees should be made aware of those invitations when they are sent, so technically who will need to be CC'd. We will also provide opportunities for you to provide specific instructions to follow in terms of inviting the contacts you designate. This is a process that we are starting today that we request be complete by the 30th of March. That is to give us a little bit of padding so that we are in a position to send invitations later on. You will see at that link in the

form all the information and instructions. We will share a communication with the GAC so hopefully you can help us constitute that list of invitees as quickly as possible, again, so that we are in a position to send invitations as soon as possible. And that is it for me.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much. I just wanted to repeat that you should rest assured that we will continue considering contributions on agenda topics via email or during the regular Zoom calls we have intersessionally. With that, let me kindly ask at this point, Baher, Janis, or Einas, is there anything we did not cover? Is there anything you would like to add at this point? If that is not the case, let me ask both online and in the room if there is anything you would like to add before we wrap up. We are a good thirteen minutes ahead of time, which is always good for coffee conversations. I just want to make sure that everybody had the chance to suggest anything. I see a hand online. Switzerland, please go ahead.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Nico. Putting my national hat on, I think it would be a very good opportunity to try to include representatives from other stakeholders within the ICANN community in the conversation of the High Level Governmental Meeting. I guess this will be done. I see that there is somebody pointing to that in the ideas. But further than having the opportunity of bilaterals or of contact with SOAC leadership as such, I think it is important also to have multi-

stakeholder conversations in the panels, if there are any. There is also opportunity for people from other stakeholder groups to deliver statements or to address the governments present because it is part of the ICANN multi-stakeholder approach that we not only talk to ourselves between governments in this case, but that we talk to each other. I think that would be fitting in good practice and also with the idea we mentioned in Kigali of considering the São Paulo Multi-stakeholder Guidelines as a sort of guidance for how we do things within ICANN. So I just wanted to say that. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much, Switzerland. I see no other hands online or in the room, so we are wrapping up. Thank you so much, Einas. Thank you, Baher. Thank you, Janis. And of course, thank you so much, Fabien and Ian, my distinguished vice chair. The only one on site, by the way. Greatly appreciated indeed. We are going to wrap up the session right now. Please be back in the room at 04:30 PM for the discussion on the CCG ROR. Enjoy the well-deserved and much needed coffee. Thank you.

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