
ICANN86 Seville | PF – At-Large Plenary 2: At-Large Preparations for the Next Round - Comments, Objections and Community Engagement
Wednesday, June 10, 2026 – 11:45 to 13:15 CEST

MICHELLE DESMYTER

Hello and welcome, everyone, to the At-Large Plenary 2: At-Large Preparations for the Next Round - Comments, Objections, and Community Engagement. My name is Michelle DeSmyter and I'm the Participation Manager for this session today.

Please note that this session is being recorded and governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. Interpretation for today's session will include English, French, and Spanish.

If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom. On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Please state your name for the record, the language you will speak, if speaking a language other than English. And please speak at a reasonable pace for our interpreters today. And with this, I will now hand the floor over to Hannah Frank and Dev Anand Teelucksingh, co-leads of the At-Large Small Team on Objections. Please begin.

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH

Thank you. Thank you, Michelle. Good morning, everyone, and good afternoon, good evening to any remote participants, including myself, coming in remotely from Trinidad and Tobago. But I'm very glad as a co-chair of the ALAC small teams on objections to co-chair this plenary session on our At-Large preparations for the next round, including how we do comments, objections, and our community engagement. My co-chair, Hannah Frank, is in the room in Seville. Hannah, you could probably say a few words.

HANNAH FRANK

Thank you so much, Hannah Frank, for the record. Yeah, we hope we are going to deep dive a little bit about this and we really thank you, Elisa Busetto, who is from ICANN org, and Marco, who is the vice chair of the GAC. They will give a presentation so thank you so much, that's all. And Hadia too that she's moderating this session and Cliff that is online, he's going to speak. Thank you.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH

Okay, lovely. Thank you, Hannah. This is Dev Anand again. So, we have a packed agenda if you go to the next slide, so let's get right to it. Well, let's just start with other slide deck, the Plenary.

MICHELLE DESMYTER

Apologies. One moment.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH No worries.

MICHELLE DESMYTER There we go.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH Lovely. All right. So, as you see, this is Dev again, so we have a packed agenda. So, up next, we have the ALAC At-Large procedure for filing comments and objections. Next slide and, well, next slide again.

Okay, so the genesis for the work that we've been doing is enshrined in the applicant guidebook, which says, quote, Funding for ALAC is contingent on publication by ALAC of its approved process for considering and making objections. At a minimum, the process for objecting to an application will require three things. A bottom-up development of potential objections, discussion and approval of objections at the RALO level, and a process for consideration and approval of the objection by the ALAC. So, next slide.

So, the ALAC can file objections on two grounds, limited public interest objection which means that the applied for gTLD string is contrary to accepted legal norms of morality and public order, recognized under principles of international law. And then there's community objection, where there's substantial opposition to the gTLD application from a significant portion of the community to

which the gTLD string may be explicitly or implicitly targeted. Now, both these objections have certain tests and conditions to be met in order for an objection to prevail against a gTLD string. And you'll learn more about that later on in the agenda. Next slide.

So, there's another party that can file objections and that's the independent objector, which impacts how we submit objections. It's a standing panel of three individuals or entities selected by ICANN that are supposed to act in the best interest of the public that use the global internet. They can file limited public interest and community objections. They have automatic standing to object. They cannot file an objection unless an application comment has been made, and they also cannot file an objection if another objection on the same ground has been filed. Just to note that the independent objector has extra days after the end of the objection period to file objections.

Okay, next slide. Okay, nope, that went backwards, forward. Next slide. Okay. All right, so the next slide. Perfect. So, let's look at the timeline for the new gTLD round. So, in mid-October, we need to go back one more slide. Yeah, thank you. So, Reveal Day, which is all tentative given that the projected timeline may change things based on the number of applications received, but tentatively, the Reveal Day is scheduled for mid-October 2026, when all the applications have published.

In mid-November 2026, there will be a String Confirmation Day when the list of applications and strings after applicants have made

their changes to their applications. And that will kick off two things, the application comment period and the objection period. Those are going to run concurrently all the way to the mid-February 2027, which is 104 days after String Confirmation Day. So, next slide. Lovely.

So, because of this, the ALAC is going to decide to prioritize the submission of public comments before the end of the application comment period, before deciding on whether to file formal objections, which has to be done, well, at least 10 days before the end of the objection period for the new gTLD 2026 round. We need several days before the end of the objection period because we have to notify ICANN that we intend to file because ICANN will pay the fees for filing objections.

So ICANN itself requires notification, at least 10 days prior in order for that to work smoothly. So, we have published our procedure and it can be found at that wiki link below. If this is projected on a screen, there's a QR code that you could use to go to that website. All right. Let's move on to the next slide.

Okay, so let's just highlight what our timeline itself is like. Again, all projected timeline based on 2,000 applications received and if there are any changes, then obviously this would also change.

But right now, we're at ICANN86 in June and today we're kicking off the call for people to join the At-Large gTLD Applications Review Group. This is the group that's going to help screen applications for community or public interest concerns. They're going to gather

feedback across the RALOs through the ALAC and also help prepare the ALAC comments and draft formal objections and also handle the appeals as well.

I should also mention that we are also funded to handle appeals as well. When the decision has been made regarding an objection, we can appeal the decision if you want to. And we'll learn more about the gARG, but one key requirement is that all gARG members must be free from perceived or actual conflicts of interest. And that's going to be happening between now and the 1st of July, 2026. Next slide.

So, on Reveal Day and going to mid-December 2026, because Reveal Day, we'll see the strings that are being applied for, we could start earlier than waiting for String Confirmation Day. So, the idea would be for the RALOs and the gARG to review to identify all gTLD strings for public interest or community concerns by mid-December 2026. Next slide.

So, because we know from mid-December 2026 to, well, the first week of January, there will be a slowdown, but depending on our workload that we have identified, from mid-December 2026 to the third week in January 2027, the gARG and the ALAC will then focus on drafting the comments and submitting comments to the application comment forum. Okay, so the next slide.

And in the last week of January 2027, the ALAC in consultation with RALOs will have to decide whether to draft formal objections because we need time to actually submit the objections and go to

our ratification process. So, this is what we're aiming for in terms of like this is the last point where we should try to decide whether to file formal objections or not. And next slide.

And if we do decide to file formal objections, then during the first week of February 2027, we'd have to send the RALOs the objection statements for the RALOs to vote. What happens is that three RALOs must support the objection statements in order for the ALAC itself to then vote on whether to send the objections or file the objections. And if there are objections that have gone up through this process, then ICANN is notified if the ALAC has voted to submit objections supported by at least three RALOs. So, that's the end of the timeline. Let's go to the next slide.

And yeah, so with that, I think that's our conclusion of what we are doing for our procedure. Again, that's a link I shared earlier as the detailed text of the actual procedure, but hopefully what I've presented is enough for everybody to understand. And with that, I'll stop and I believe that our next slide is from Elisa. So, Elisa, thanks so much for coming to our session. The floor is yours.

ELISA BUSETTO

Thank you so much. This is Elisa Busetto from ICANN Org for the record. So, I think before we go through the slides, I would just like to share that we have recently published a procedure for the ALAC to be able to request funding to file objections and appeals. And my colleague Daniela will briefly post the link to the chat. So, we have already discussed it with the group, so I don't think it should

raise any concerns and from what I've seen, you guys are well prepared for this. And I think we can then go to the next slide, please.

Just a quick reminder that while we're presenting on the different processes and procedures, our presentations are mostly simplifications of what's in the new gTLD program applicant guidebook. So, please refer to the applicant guidebook for authoritative information on our processes. And next slide, please. And next slide.

So, first, as you know, the round is now open, so folks can submit applications and we launched on the 30th of April, as we promised a few years ago. And the application submission window will stay open until the 12th of August. And next slide, please.

So, here's the timeline that we actually just briefly already went through. And just as a reminder, everything you see here is provisional, apart from the opening of the window, which has already happened. Everything else will very much depend on the number of applications that we will receive, as well as other factors. So, please be prepared to adjust your timeline once we publish more information on what we expect. But of course, ICANN org will be proactive in informing the community as soon as we have more clarity on the various dates. Next slide, please.

So, here's as a reminder, I believe, for most of you, the different processes that the community has to provide feedback on applications. So, the first is application comments, which as you

know can be posted on the application comment forum, which is an ICANN managed platform that will open on String Confirmation Day. It will stay open virtually forever, but only the comments that are received during specified windows will be considered by evaluators. And the main window is the 104 days following String Confirmation Day, as you know. Application comments do not have an impact on the outcome of the application per se, but as they might be considered by evaluators, they might eventually have some impact.

Then GAC members and observers can issue GAC member early warnings, ideally also during this 104-day window and the GAC as a whole can issue advice at any point. Anybody, meaning also the ALAC or all members of the community, can file singular/plural notifications during the 30 days following String Confirmation Day on a claim that an applied for string is a singular or plural form of another applied for string, a delegated TLD, or a string being processed from a previous round, or a block name. This comes at no cost and there will be a form, I believe, on our website where you will be able to submit such notifications.

And finally, and I think this is where you will spend most of your time following String Confirmation Day, is objections. Objections can be filed on different grounds and do have a cost attached. And as you know and as just mentioned, there will be funding available from ICANN to file both objections and appeals. So, in case the ALAC does not prevail, it will have the chance to appeal the panel

determination. And such costs can also be covered to ICANN, of course, subject to certain requirements. And next slide, please.

So, here, we just wanted to include some screenshots from our systems. We were asked if we could actually share how the application dashboard I believe it will be called will look like, meaning what will be visible to the general public, but unfortunately, we're still working on that. So, for now we're just sharing some of the systems that are already working or that we're still testing for which we have some screenshots available. Our teams are working really hard on this, so next slide please.

The first one is the Application Comment Forum which as I mentioned will be launched on String Confirmation Day. It's managed by us and as you will see, we really made it as user-friendly as possible. And when I say we, I don't mean myself for sure. Please, next slide.

So, this is, I think, the home page and as you see there is some general information on what we call ACF. And commenters will be able to, by click add comment, submit comments on applications. There are some steps in between. So, you will have to have an ICANN org account, an ICANN account, to be able to submit comments, but also answer some questions. And this is because, as mentioned, the comments will be available to evaluators, and we want to make sure that evaluators are aware of any potential conflicts of interest or information about the person submitting the comment.

We have worked with the implementation review team on a set of questions that commenters will have to answer and such questions will also be public. I think some of the answers will be public, but in any case, they will be made available to the evaluators. So, it's not going to be just add comment, there are some steps before for transparency purposes, of course. And next slide, please.

And here is just a simple comment, not a lot of text, but this is what it's going to look like for the public. So, applicants will also have the chance to submit a response to each comment. As you can see, there's a field, Applicant Response, and all the responses that are submitted in the 30 days following String Confirmation Day will be made available to evaluators as well so that they can take them into account. And next slide, please.

And here's a few screenshots from TAMS, which stands for TLD Application Management System, and this system is already operational, and it's a system that's used, among other things, for applicants to submit their applications. And here you will just have the chance to take a look at what TAMS looks like for applicants. Next slide, please.

So, here's, I think we call it dashboard, homepage. I'm looking at my colleagues here who are taking care of this and here you see that you have different fields. One is for Create Organization and one is Start Application. This means that if applicants are going to apply for several strings they will have to fill out the organization of information only once and then they will be able to submit several

applications under that specific entity. And here you see there are tasks assigned, inquiries assigned, so everything will be visible to them on this main page, the next slide, or it's visible to them because it's happening.

And here's just a couple of examples of the questions that applicants are being asked to answer. Here is a screenshot for our organization information and in the next slide, please, you see this is instead for the application itself for the string or strings, the applicants are applying for currently. And I think these are all the screenshots we were able to share. And apologies again, we're not really, I mean, not really apologies, I think our teams are working really hard on this so we weren't able to share the dashboard that will be visible to the general public. And next slide, please.

So, here, I just wanted to give you a quick overview on the objections and appeal processes, although I think most of you are already quite familiar with them. Next slide. So, again, about independent objectors, so we're currently in the process of selecting independent objectors and it will be a standing panel of three individuals or entities selected by ICANN. And they will not act on behalf of any persons or entities, but only in the best interest of the public who use the global internet. In the last round, there was only one independent objector, but this time around we will have three. So, independent objectors can only file limited public interest and community objections, and they will have to consider application comments.

They will not object to an application unless at least one comment opposing the application has been made. They will not have their objection considered if another objection on the same ground has passed the quick look review, absent extraordinary circumstances. And they will have seven additional days compared to the general public to file objections.

So, the general public has 104 days and independent objectors will have 111. And this is because of the fact that if another objection on the same ground has already been filed, they should not file it. So, they will also have the chance to sort of triage the objections that they intend to file. And same as the ALAC, same as other parties, they may also appeal their relevant panel determinations. Next slide, please.

So, here's an overview of the two grounds on which the independent objectors may file objections, but also other parties, of course. So, limited public interest objections can be filed by anybody on a claim that the string or strings are contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law. We have also included the principles in this slide and we would really like you to refer to the applicant guidebook for more information on what the panels are going to look at when it comes to limited public interest. And next slide, please.

Community objections can only be filed by established institutions associated with clearly delineated communities, but we would like

to remind you that independent objectors may file community objections notwithstanding the regular standing requirements. And the claim for community objection is that there is well-substantiated opposition to a string from a significant portion of the community, which the string may explicitly or implicitly target. And please note that, again, in the applicant guidebook, there is more information also on what we mean by this claim. And this is something that, once again, the objection panels will be looking at when making their determination. Next slide. Thank you.

Something we would like you to note is that objections and appeals will not be published, but information that an objection or an appeal was filed will be posted to the DRSP's websites. Meaning that you will have the chance to monitor the DRSP's website to see whether an objection against a specific application has already been filed. In addition, ICANN will add what we call a flag on TAMS, which as a reminder is the TLD Application Management System, to the affected applications as soon as feasible after the objection has been filed and the DRSP has notified ICANN. However, the authoritative source to see whether an objection has been filed is the DRSP website because this will happen in a much more timely manner than us adding the flag.

Independent objectors, unlike the general public, will have access to the objections as they are being filed. And this is because while independent objectors are not supposed to file objections, if an objection on the same ground has already been filed, there are

extraordinary circumstances that apply. And that we will actually discuss with the IRT on Thursday, so tomorrow, I think. And they will have to be able to look at the objection to verify whether such extraordinary circumstances apply.

Something else that's not mentioned on the slide, but is probably relevant, is that the panel determinations will be made public. So, once the panel has determined whether an application can proceed, can only proceed with modifications, or cannot proceed, such determinations will be published on the DRSP websites, and we will also link them on TAMS making sure that applicants are also informed accordingly. And I think next slide. And yeah, I will now open, I think, the floor for questions. You're going to moderate?

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Yeah.

ELISA BUSETTO

Thank you.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you so much. Yes, so any questions to Dev or Elisa? Yeah, Amrita, please go ahead.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you so much for the presentation. Amrita for the record. I was just curious if we can go to the last slide. You've mentioned that objections and appeals will not be published. Is there a

rationale for it? Because each process wants to be more transparent and not opaque, given the sensitivity of the issues. So, what would be the rationale for not publishing it? Is it never going to be published or published after a particular duration? That would be interesting because people would be questioning that part also.

ELISA BUSETTO

Thanks, Amrita. So, objections were not published in the last round and we didn't get any indication from policy that they should be published this round. But once again, the panel determinations will be made public and that will also include information on the objections themselves, I believe.

In addition, concerning independent objectors specifically, because they act in light of the public interest, will have to fill out a specific rationale, the template of which we're currently working on, indicating why they decided to file an objection. And for instance, if such extraordinary circumstances that I mentioned earlier apply, they will also have to explain why they believe that such extraordinary circumstances do indeed apply.

So, the short answer is, we didn't get an indication that anything should be changed compared to the last round and I would also probably need to check with our district resolution service providers if there's additional reasons why this should not happen.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you. As in many times in many places, it's not the entire details which is given, but objection against this is published. Resolved, not resolved, discarded, could always be there, you know, you may not, and obviously from the first round to this, it's more than 10 years now so there's a lot. The ship has sailed a lot. Thank you.

ELISA BUSETTO

Yeah, so can I just quickly follow up? Maybe just to follow up, so information that an objection was filed will be made public. So, the public will be able to see that against a specific application and also whether if, for instance, the objection was dismissed on procedural grounds or if the objection prevailed or not prevailed, all this information will be made public.

On the DRSP website, kind of in real time in the sense that they will try and update the information there as soon as possible. On TAMS, such information will also be updated on a regular basis, but because there is some manual work in between, it might take a little bit longer. But if you do monitor the DRSP websites, you will see that as objections come in.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you, and now Claire.

CLAIRE CRAIG

Thank you, Claire Craig for the record. Thanks so much for that presentation, very informative. And it's as if each time you listen to

these presentations, you hear something that you didn't quite hear before, understand.

So, I know this was previously said, but again, for clarification, you said that funding would be provided to the ALAC At-Large community for filing objections and for petitions. Would it be fully funded or are there stipulations? And what would be the criteria for accessing that funding?

ELISA BUSETTO

Thank you, Claire. I think my colleague Daniela posted the link. So, subject to certain requirements, which are mentioned on the link that I issued again, objections and appeals will be fully funded by ICANN, so there won't have to be any percentage that the ALAC will have to chip in for, again, as long as we receive the information on time.

What's really important is that we need to receive the information on time to perform due diligence, of course, internally, inform the DRSPs, so the Dispute Resolution Service Providers, which in our case are YPO and ICC, that objects from the ALAC are coming in, so that they can invoice us instead of the ALAC. So, this is, in a nutshell, what's going to happen, but again, you can find more information on the link that I shared, and we discussed this with the small team as well so we believe this should work.

And there's also a form that the ALAC will have to fill out, of course, providing information on the objections that they intend to file, as

well as who is going to file them. We require the ALAC to have contact points, also because of the relationship that they will have to have with the DRSP. It can be quite a lot of work because the DRSP might ask for additional information. There might be hearings, so the DRSP might also request a hearing.

So, it's very important to have specific individuals that are going to take care of this and this should also be mentioned in the form. But outside this, it's going to be due diligence on our end, which is why we would like to have a little bit of time to process the request before confirming it.

And also, something maybe to mention, because we are going to pay the DRSP directly, of course, we don't want to have a scenario where the ALAC pays the DRSP and then we have to refund the ALAC or something like this so we try to make it as clear as possible in our instructions.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you so much, Elisa, and seeing no more hands in the room, we move now to Marco and he's going to give the GAC update on objections. Marco, the floor is yours.

MARCO HOGEWONING

Thank you. I must say, as representing the Government Advisory Committee, it's a pleasure to be here. It's not that often that we get invited by ALAC to come and talk about our work and present so I'm glad to, and I look forward. And just to note, and I only have

one slide, I'll talk you through it, as I had said, objections and I saw some of you in the room yesterday as the GAC worked through some of this stuff, there's more pathways for us to provide feedback, and it's certainly not only objections.

And importantly, and that somewhat makes the GAC unique in another sense, as we sometimes are, the AGB has described a process that's known as GAC early warnings. That's quite interesting for us because as soon as Reveal Day comes, actually String Confirmation Day comes, the GAC has 104 days to file what's known as an early warning and that's very simple.

It's a non-binding way for us governments to indicate to a particular applicant, saying, "Hey, have you thought about this?" Or, "Hey, can we have a talk?" And that's the important bit. So, while we do have to provide rationale on why we flag it, why we think there's something wrong, it also really much works as a conversation starter.

So, as a GAC, we're not saying no. We're simply saying to the applicant, "Hey, there's some concerns," and those concerns might be related to public interest, but it also might be very government-specific, for instance with geographical indications or product names, where we say, "Wait a minute, we have an interest here. Can we have a chat?"

And what we saw, and that's also from lessons learned from 2012, that starting that process helps, for instance, to define specific requirements in the contract, like the public interest

considerations, the registry voluntary commitment. And we, as the GAC, hope that that will be also our main tool. So, we're currently really busy with the GAC readiness to make sure that everybody is going for it.

The drawback of this project is we only have 104 days once we know the strings so it's going to be quite a huge task. The benefit being and the way the process works, any GAC member and any observer can file this. So, it doesn't require a lot of conversation with the GAC. It doesn't require us to build consensus. It is fired. We are looking into ways to group them. We are looking into ways to streamline the process and making sure that once those conversations start, everybody can be part of it. But as sort of in relation to providing feedback, my feeling, and that's also where we're discussing with the GAC, is this should probably be our primary tool to get it started, also because it's so early in the process.

Then, of course, there are comments, and we had a bit of discussion yesterday also with ICANN staff about, yeah, it might be useful if we want to leave a signal here. My own suspicion is that for governments and for our observers, if they want to react to something, probably they'll seek early warnings, but comments are open to our citizens, comments are open also as a government so we might use it. I'm not sure how much you will see.

Then, of course, there is indeed the objections and we just spent a bit of time learning about them, looking at it from a GAC

perspective. Of course, we need funding. Now, happily, just as with ALAC, ICANN is also providing some baseline funding, some baseline support for governments if they need to file an objection. I believe as a government we can file one objection for free, so at least we have that backstop, and I appreciate ICANN for considering that and budgeting for it.

The big challenge I see with objections is you need standing, and for some of the public interest discussions that we will probably enter into, it might be not impossible, but let's say challenging, to really concisely argue that as a government we have standing in particular cases, but it is open to us. I'm sure colleagues are looking into it.

We have discussed it, but as I said, my feeling, looking at it, also speaking as a government, that the thresholds might be a bit challenging for us to really go into the objection process and make that work. That said, who knows? It's still unpredictable. We know when we see the strings.

Then, of course, there's GAC Advice and GAC Advice is not specific to the next round. The bylaws are pretty straightforward. The GAC is in a position to, at any point Provide advice to the board on any decision that is before the board. And as far as I understood, any delegation of a TLD is formally a board decision, so we can use the tool. It's a very big instrument and we're fully aware of that blunt force. It's actually sending GAC Advice saying you shouldn't do this,

and of course, it needs a rationale, but we fully understand that this is the really big thing.

What we also sensed working with the room yesterday, working with the committee, is that a lot of people, and for GAC Advice it really requires consensus, and a lot of people see that as a challenge. In between the diverse views of the governments and trying to coax 184 governments and a number of observers into consensus on any particular topic. Looking back at the previous round, and it was mentioned, there's been several items of GAC Advice in the previous round, but none of them were specific to strings. They were all about the way the auctions proceed. They were sort of more process-focused and more towards the evaluation of the round than it was on specific strings.

My expectations, if you ask me personally, I'm not easily seeing that the GAC will find consensus very soon on any particular applicant or any particular string, but as I said, it's still a large part unpredictable. We know what we know and we'll see it when we see the results and then the list. Main key and that's really, I think our key message and I hope that that's also some common ground with ALAC is, it's really our intention to remain constructive throughout the process. I mean, we've settled with this. We want this to work. We want new domains.

It's also really important as one of our key objectives to help the underserved regions, to help the underrepresented regions, to bring in more variety in language and scripts. This is a perfect way

for us. So, in full support of this process, it is certainly our intention to not be the blocking one. There for sure will be cases where a government or a group of governments will have issues with a particular string or with the nature of a particular application, and I'm sure we'll work through them.

But we're really trying to get in this as open as we can. Let's have this conversation. Let's work it out with the applicant, with the other ICANN constituents and address the concerns before it's delegated, and then just happy to have this document. I'll leave it here for now. This is my intervention.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you so much, Marco, and now we move to Dev, who's going to speak about comments and objections on limited public interest grounds.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH

Thank you. This is Dev Anand Teelucksingh. So, regarding the limited public interest grounds, next slide, so according to the applicant guidebook and 4.5.10.3, for those who want to jump to that section, a panel hearing a limited public interest objection will consider whether the relevant gTLD string is contrary to general principles of international law for morality and public order. And there's a wide list of instruments that can change such principles.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,

Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and so on. And for those who download the slide, those hyperlinks to the actual instruments are provided.

And the applicant guidebook goes on to say that this list is not meant to be exhaustive and also note that national laws not based -- sorry, let me say that again. National laws not based on principles of international law are not a valid ground for a limited public interest objection. So, that means that if your country has a particular restriction and it's only in that country, that's not a global principle of international law alone. All right, next slide.

So, there are four grounds for which a gTLD string may be considered contrary to generally accepted legal norms related to morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law. And the four grounds are incitement to or promotion of violent lawless action, incitement to or promotion of discrimination based on race, gender, color, ethnicity, or other similar types of discrimination that violate generally accepted legal norms recognized under principles of international law. Incitement to or promotion of child sexual abuse material or other sexual abuse of children, and the final ground, a determination that a gTLD string would be contrary to specific principles of international law as reflected in relevant international instruments of law.

So, a public interest objection can be filed on one of these four grounds or multiple of these four grounds. It's important to note

that the panel, and I should clarify, this is the DRSP panel, will conduct its analysis on the basis of the gTLD string itself. And the panel may, if needed, use as additional context the intended purpose of the gTLD as stated in the application. Next slide.

Okay, so what we want to have is some questions to ask when the At-Large community is looking to evaluate strings, whether there are any concerns on limited public interest grounds. And, you know, these four questions were just taken straight from the four grounds of the limited public interest objections. Does the applied for string incite or promote violent lawless action?

Does they applied for string incite to promote discrimination based on race, color, gender, ethnicity, et cetera, or other similar types of discrimination that violate accepted legal norms recognized under principles of international law? Does the string incite to promote child sexual abuse material or other sexual abuse of children? Or is there a determination that the gTLD string will be contrary to specific principles of international law as reflected in relevant international instruments of law?

So, those are the four questions that we need to look at when the At-Large community and the gARG, after Reveal Day, scans the list of strings to see whether there are any concerns on limited public interest grounds. Next slide. I think that's it for limited public interest. Yeah. Okay, I'll turn the floor over to the next speaker. Thanks.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you, Dev, and now we will be talking on comments and objections on community grounds. Mutegeki Cliff and myself will be presenting. I will start and then give the floor to Mutegeki. Can we have the next slide please?

I would just like to note that all questions will be taken after this set of slides. Item 8 on the agenda, the hands in the room are noted. So, we start with, community objections is the other type of objections that can be filed against a new gTLD application. Under the Applicant Guidebook, a community objection can be filed when there is well-substantiated opposition to an applied for gTLD string from a significant portion of the community that the string may be either explicitly or implicitly targeting.

In other words, if a community feels that a proposed gTLD misrepresents them, harms them, or is being used inappropriately in their name, they have a formal venue to object, but not just anyone can file this type of objection. The Applicant Guidebook sets out specific standing requirements, meaning the objector has to demonstrate that they have the right to bring the objection in the first place. And to have standing, the objector must satisfy two conditions.

The first, the objector, must be an established institution. This means the organization has to have real documented history and recognition. Factors to be considered include, how widely recognized is this situation globally? How long has it existed? Is

there public historical evidence, such a formal charter, national or international registration, or validation by a government or intergovernmental body? Critically, the institution cannot have been created specifically for the purpose of filing this objection. It has to have pre-existing legitimacy.

Second, the objector must have an ongoing relationship with a clearly delineated community. This isn't just about claiming to represent a group. Factors to be considered, the presence of mechanisms for community participation, things like membership structures, leadership processes, regular activities, institutional purposes generally oriented to benefit that community, and whether the community itself has clear formal boundaries. Both conditions must be met. Meeting only one of them is not sufficient for standing.

So, the key takeaway here is that community objections are a meaningful, but carefully gated tool. They exist to protect communities from having their identity or name exploited, but they require the objector to demonstrate genuine, established, and ongoing ties to that community. If we can have the next slide, please.

So, four tests are described here that will enable the panel to determine whether there is substantial opposition to the applicant's proposed representation of the community from a significant portion of the community to which the string may be targeted. And with this, I stop and hand the floor to Mutegeki Cliff

to walk you through the four tests and the questions associated with them.

MUTEGEKI CLIFF

Thank you so much, Hadia. Good afternoon, good morning, good evening, wherever you're joining in from. And my name is Mutegeki Cliff for the record. This slide that we are at is really at the heart of the community objection process. And for it to succeed, an objection must satisfy four tests, as you can see. That is community, substantial opposition, targeting, and detriment. And the key thing to remember is that all four tests must be met. You can't have a strong case in three areas and ignore the fourth. And if any one of these is missing, then the objection will fail. And the next few slides will break these tests down into practical questions that can help us evaluate the applications. Next slide, please.

So, let's begin with the first test, which is community. And here we want to determine whether the objector represents a clearly delineated community with a legitimate association to the string. And some questions include, how the group publicly is recognized as a community, how long has it existed? How large is it? Is it local? Is it regional? Is it global? And these questions help establish whether the community has a clear identity and structure.

And this is important because even if many people object to an application, the objection will fail if the panel determines that there is no clearly defined community behind it. So, once we've established that there is a genuine community, the next question

becomes how much support exists for the objection? Next slide, please.

Now, moving on to substantial opposition, this brings us to a stage where the panel is looking for evidence that opposition comes from a significant portion of the community, not just a few individuals or organizations. And some of the questions here include, how many members of the community are opposed? The questions represent the broader community, recognized leaders, or respected institutions, are they recognized leaders or respected institutions? And is the opposition diverse or geographically distributed?

So, here, what we are really trying to understand is whether this is a community-wide concern or simply a minority view. And once substantial opposition has been established, we then need to determine whether the application is actually targeting that community in the first place. Next slide please. Thank you.

So, the third test is targeting and this is about relationship between the applied for string and the community, and the partner may determine the application itself. Then public statements are made by the applicant and how the wider community would interpret the string.

Now, here, you look at questions like would people naturally associate the string with the community? The other question is, has the applicant positioned the string as serving or representing that community? And if the answer is no, then even a clearly defined community with a substantial opposition may not succeed

in this objection. So, after establishing a connection between the string and the community, we arrive at the final question, which is, what harm might result if the string is delegated? Next slide, please.

So, the fourth test is detriment and here the objector must demonstrate that delegation of a string would cause material harm to the community. And this could include reputational damage, things like interference with community activities, economic harm, or concerns about how the string could be operated. And one of the most important considerations is evidence. And the panel will want to know whether the alleged harm is likely or demonstrable rather than just being speculative. In other words, it's not enough to say we are concerned. The objector must show why those concerns translate into real and measurable detriment to the community.

So, just to summarize, a successful community objection requires four things. A clearly delineated community, substantial opposition, a clear link between the string and that community, and evidence of material detriment. So, for At-Large, these four tests provide a practical framework for identifying concerns, gathering evidence, and determining whether a community objection may be appropriate in the next round. Thank you so much, and I look forward to the discussion ahead.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you so much, Mutegeki, and now we move to the questions. And we have a hand up from Aziz Hilali. Professor Aziz, the floor is yours.

AZIZ HILALI

I will speak in French. Please take your headphones. I would like to underscore the fact that comment mechanisms and objection mechanisms are important, but it's also very important for them to be accessible. As we get towards this new gTLD round, it's important to recognize the fact that many communities, especially in underrepresented regions or countries, don't necessarily always have the legal resources that are necessary, as the GAC representative said earlier, or technical and human resources, and sometimes financial resources. They don't have the necessary resources to analyze the applications and to be efficient in their objections within the timeframe they have.

So, I think it's important to raise awareness to work on capacity building and I know that there are already ALSs and RALOs that are trying to do this, but I think we need to have support measures that are practical so that these mechanisms are really accessible to all in every region. And so, that participation is not limited to the players who already have important resources. Thank you for your attention.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Marco, if you want to answer.

MARCO HOGEWONING

Yes, exactly, and I share your sentiments. It's going to be a really big challenge. So, just to link to GAC, we're really trying to burden share. We're really trying to group together. The more eyes, the better on this. Interestingly, we talked to several governments also doing that nationally. So, working nationally, also with multi-stakeholder forums, for instance, to go over the applications together, but importantly, and I'm not sure whether it was part of Elisa's presentation here, there seems to be some indication for ICANN also to make sure that the applications will be presented in a machine-readable format. So, we also intend to see what we can do with modern technology to produce some of the applications that might help.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you, Aziz. And I would also note that AFRALO, and I'm sure all the other RALOs as well, are going to embark on capacity development programs for the ALSs and individual members. And hopefully they are able to help their communities as well in reviewing the applications. I don't know if anyone wants to comment to Aziz, to reply. Yes, we have a hand first from Claire. Okay, so now we go to Jonathan. Do we have anyone else that wants to comment to Professor Aziz's comment? So, from the panels? Okay. Now we move to Jonathan and Jonathan, please go ahead.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Yes, Jonathan Zuck here for the record. It seems to imply that the applied for string needs to be intentionally targeting a community and I guess I just wonder whether or not -- Well, two things.

One is, if it's unintentional, and I'm trying to think of an example, but .amazon, I think, could have been considered, had that been less a government issue and more of a community issue, that could have been an unintentional, you know, use of a string as opposed to really targeting a community. And then the other issue that's related is, what if it's designed to be a critique of a community or something like that, how does that fit into the objection process?

ELISA BUSETTO

Thank you, Jonathan. I will maybe start from your questions. So, concerning whether it's intentional or unintentional as well, and I think that this is something that the panels will have to look at based on the principles.

So, I'm just looking at what we have in the Applicant Guidebook, and all the information that the panels will look at is what is in there. So, the interpretation of the principles will be very much up to the panel. I can maybe also check with the team if they have more of an idea on this, but once again, everything that will be made available to the panel is included in the AGB. But yeah, point taken, we can maybe discuss it later and revert.

Then I just wanted to add a few or clarify a few points. First of all, to Amrita's point from earlier concerning the publication of objections, I just wanted to clarify that it's actually after the administrative review that the information of objections will be made public. So, there will be more or less two-week gap between the time the objection is filed and information is made public. And apologies if earlier I wasn't clear. I just wanted to rectify this for the record.

And also, information on standing as well as principles is included in the Applicant Guidebook and I have posted a couple of links on the chat. So, please do make sure to refer to those as well on top of the information that is in the slides. Also, concerning potential gaps for communities not having the means to file objections or potentially not even being informed, we would also like to remind you that independent objectors can file community objections. Meaning that we also hope that such gaps might also be addressed by independent objectors. But as also Marco mentioned, all other possible means are more than welcome. Please note that.

Indy, also something that might be of relevance to you is that, we're currently working on an information pack meant for independent objectors that we will actually discuss tomorrow with the implementation review team. And we actually also have a paragraph concerning standing for filing community objections, and we do also mention the ALAC there so that this is also clear to the IO.

Finally, regarding how easy it is for the community to review the applications that have been submitted, we mentioned it to the small team, but we would also like to mention this to you. The general public, anybody will be able to download a file, including all information, so a CSV file, that this will be made available, I believe, on String Confirmation Day, if not on Reveal Day already. So, this should also help with the review of the various strings and applications. I'm sorry, this was a lot of information. I hope this can help. Thank you.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you, Elisa, and again, I'm going back to Jonathan's questions and in targeting, you have three main angles. And the first angle is whether there are statements made by the applicant with their application establishing or suggesting a strong link between the gTLD and the community. The second is the public statements outside of the application itself and the third is the public perspective.

So, my question to you, do all three angles need to be there for the objection to be successful? Or you can have only one angle or two, but not the three altogether? Because that would solve the dilemma of intention, right?

ELISA BUSETTO

Yeah, thank you for the question, and I'm referring to the Applicant Guidebook here, more specifically, it's section 4.5.10.4.1, a

mouthful. I will also post the link. So, it will be up to the panel to balance the several factors. And as you know, we have contracted ICC, so the International Chamber of Commerce, to adjudicate on community and limited public interest objections and they have plenty of experience in this area. And they will really aim to find the best possible panelists to look at this and such panels will once again have to refer to what's in the guidebook and the wording is balance. Meaning that it will be very much up to them to figure out which factors to take into account.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you, Elisa, and we'll take two more hands we have because we need to move to our next panelist, Hannah. So, Christopher Wilkinson, if you can really be brief. Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER WILKINSON

Hello, everybody, this is Christopher Wilkinson. I was a member of the original PDP for this program. It seems to me that this is more a comment than a question, but very quickly, first of all, I think you will need to review and create an appeals mechanism because I believe that it is not physically or legally or logically impossible to exhaust all the risks and bases of different problems that may have emerged. So, we need an appeals mechanism.

Secondly, IDN is one of the priorities for the new round, and there are a lot of languages and scripts in the world, let alone on the internet, which ICANN in general and our community in general

really don't take into account, and it's almost impossible to do so. But you will have the risk or even the opportunity to deal with applications and objections in languages which we are, frankly, very unfamiliar with.

There are other questions that one could develop, but I think those are the two main points that I'd like to make at this stage. I basically agree with the warning that Jonathan has put into the discussion to the effect that targeting is a concept which could be considered to be different in different contexts. Thank you.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you, Christopher, for your comments. Well noted and there is indeed an appeals mechanism. We'll take now Avri Doria, and then we move to Hannah. Thank you.

AVRI DORIA

Okay, thank you. Avri speaking. I just wanted to check on a possible gap. Aziz spoke of the gap for the uninformed, the people that aren't following, those who are incapable and the response was, well, we have an IO to be able to take care of that. And apologies if I have not been following closely enough. The IO, as I understood from earlier speech, can only file an objection on something that has already come up in previous discussions, in previous whatever.

Now, if these are folks that are truly not paying attention, incapable of basically following what's going on, even if the IO knew that

something was going on, but nobody else had filed anything on it, how would they be able to file an objection on behalf of something that wasn't already complained about?

ELISA BUSETTO

Thank you, Avri. I will start maybe with your question. So, IOs indeed will not be able to file an objection unless there is at least one comment in opposition to that application. And I think here we also rely on the ICANN community to actually monitor such applications that should be subject to a community objection and the ALAC will also have the opportunity, of course, to file comments.

However, once again, here we are, I think that there is also policy in this regard, or still we are just following what was in the SubPro final report as well as what was done in 2012. So, we would once again encourage you to monitor applications closely and ensure that if you do identify a gap, if you are aware of a gap, you can also file a comment in this sense. But I don't think that this is something that ICANN can do on top of giving this opportunity to bridge such gaps. And please, Avri, go ahead.

AVRI DORIA

Just to add, so that's really an admonition to us that while we may not have early warnings, we do have an obligation to sort of scour things, looking for who might have an issue that isn't included. And that's sort of different than an early warning because it has no real

meaning, but get anything that's possibly a problem into the system so that it can be objected to. That's quite a bit of work. Thank you.

ELISA BUSETTO

Thank you, Avri, indeed. We appreciate you for this and maybe regarding appeals, there is an appeal mechanism. And as I mentioned earlier, we will also be in the position of funding appeals for the ALAC, again, subject to the same requirements or similar requirements as for objections. And we are done. I'm sorry.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you so much, Elisa, and now we move to Hannah's presentation on the RALOs role in At-Large comments and objection procedures. We will have more time for questions later.

HANNAH FRANK

Thank you so much. Could we go to the next slide, please? Well, before discussing the role of the RALOs and this new group that's going to be launched today, the application form, it is important to understand why the early community engagement matters. And comments and objections and, of course, appeals are all available mechanisms, but they serve different purpose and occur at different stages of the process.

So, comments will provide the earliest opportunity for community participation. They allow concerns to be raised, discussed, and brought to the attention of applicants and the broader community

before any formal action is considered. So, they also provide visibility, encourage dialogue, and create an opportunity for applicants to respond.

The objections, on the other hand, are a formal escalation mechanism. They are available only on specific grounds, as you can see, require significant analysis and evidence, and ultimately require ALAC approval before moving forward. So, appeals, on the other hand, we have the appeals, and are even more limited, as you can see, they are available only on specific circumstances after an objection determination has been made and represents the final stage of this process.

The key message here is that comments provides the opportunity for community feedback, regional discussion, and engagement before any decision on a formal objection is considered. So, this is where the RALOs here place a particularly important role. So, community concerns do not begin at the ALAC level. They begin within the regions, as you mentioned about the community and the regions. That's why it's so important we then have the chance to go through the AFRALO monthly calls talking about this. But now you have the opportunity through the discussions among At-Large community members. So, let's go to the next slide, please.

I will be very brief because we are running out of time. Well, here the process begins with identifying concerns. RALO members may review applications, identify potential concerns, highlight regional sensitivities, and raise issues early in the process. Once a concern

has been identified, discussions take place within the RALOs. These discussions may occur through RALO calls, mailing lists, share workspaces, and other community discussions, allowing members to exchange views and assess whether a concern grants further consideration.

So, the next step is the cross-RALO coordination. Concerns can be shared across regions, perspectives can be exchanged, and broader awareness can be developed across our At-Large community. This coordination will also support consensus building and helps determine whether an issue has significance beyond a single region.

Finally, the RALO input helps support ALAC decision-making. Community discussions can contribute to the development of the comments, the evaluation of possible objections, and, where necessary, support ALAC considerations and appeals. In short, the RALO helps ensure that the regional perspective, sensitivities, cultures, and community input remain central throughout this process. So, while the RALOs provide regional perspective and community input, another important component of this, of the process, is the group that will help review applications and support of this work. So, let's go to the next slide, please. Well, next slide. The 35, please. Thank you.

Well, this is the At-Large gTLD Application Review Group. It's being established to support the At-Large participation in the new round of gTLD. This group is not only intent to review applications, it will

help identify applications that may raise community or limited public interest concerns, support discussion across At-Large, assist in drafting comments, monitor responses. Recommend whether concerns should be escalated to formal objections and, where necessary, assist with appeals. The group is expected to include representatives from all of each RALOs, ensuring that this regional perspective again remains an important part of this review process.

As highlighted in this slide, there are four key areas here to consider. The first are the requirements. The members should maintain and update a statement of interest, have a good understanding of the Applicant Guidebook, demonstrate a strong English proficiency, and be free from actual or perceived conflict of interest. We welcome volunteers with policy, legal, technical, linguistic, public interest, community, or regional expertise.

Regarding the conflict interest, to be transparent, examples may include publicity supporting a specific application, having a financial interest in an applicant, being employed by an applicant, providing service to an applicant, or having a close family relationship with someone who has such interest. So, as a part of this process of interest process, prospective members will be asked to declare any potential conflicts. Let's go to the responsibilities.

The gARG will review applications, identify community and limited public interest concerns, draft comments and recommendations, and support objections and appeal when needed. Regarding to the commitment, this is too much important to be clear, participation

will require weekly calls, active participation in this group and in your respective RALOs. Engagement through emails and shared workspaces, and active involvement throughout the 104-day review period.

And finally, why participate? This is an opportunity, I guess, for us as an At-Large community to contribute directly to the review of this new round of gTLD, support the At-Large comment and objections and bring regional perspective into the evaluation process. So, now I will go to Dev. Let's go to Dev again, who will explain the call for volunteers who we are launching today in this call and the process for expressing interest in joining the gARG. So, thank you.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH

Thank you, Hannah. This is Dev Anand Teelucksingh speaking. So, let's move on to the next slide. So, we have created a membership form for the At-Large community members and it's now live thanks to At-Large staff at that link. There's a QR code there, but I posted it in the Zoom chat. It's important that, again, that you need an updated At-Large statement of interest page, which is the page of the At-Large wiki that has your interest's name and so forth. So, ensure you have an updated At-Large SOI page. And if you're a member of the At-Large community that doesn't have a SOI page, well, contact staff immediately to get help set up one for you. Notify your RALO leadership that you are planning to apply for this.

And the form talks about conflicts of interest that you need to answer and all the questions there, I believe, are mandatory. So, the deadline to join, because we want to try to get the group formed as soon as possible, June 30th. And we encourage all RALOs, and I will encourage the RALO leaders if they know persons in their RALO that have the expertise, the desire to do the work, please encourage them to apply. With that, I'll stop and move on to next steps.

HANNAH FRANK

Okay, let's go. I will be so brief because we are now on time. Next slide, please, the 38. Well, the first step, we will launch this group through the call for volunteers, as Dev has just launched, and the expression of interest process. The second is building community participation by encouraging engagement across all RALOs and ensuring the regional perspective, as I said a bunch of times, continue to inform the process.

And the third is preparing the volunteers through onboarding or intention activities and readiness effort that will help members contribute effectively. And finally, all these efforts are aimed at preparing the community for Reveal Day and to the review application comments and objections.

The next step is turning preparation into participation. The success of this effort will depend on continued engagement, collaboration, and participation across the outdoor community and all five RALOs. Thank you so much. We hope that you get into the small

team. We will continue working, and then that is the base for this new group of the gARG. And I guess Marco wants to say something before we finish. Thank you, Marco.

MARCO HOGEWONING Yes, sorry for keeping you busy, but I just remembered, I think I forgot some really important points. Our intent is to publish all early warnings as soon as they're issued. So, there will be something to look at, and then we aim for full transparency in that process. If you want to read back, also the 2012 EWs are still online somewhere.

HADIA EL MINIAWI Thank you so much and we have one question in this chat that says, "Will the workings of the gARG be open to the observers?"

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH This is Dev.

HANNAH FRANK Oh, sorry, Dev, go ahead.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH Okay, no, this is Dev. Well, we haven't made a decision yet on that, but we will make that announcement well before Reveal Day.

HADIA EL MINIAWI

Thank you, everyone, and we come to the end of this session. We thank you all for your participation. Thank you to panelists who joined us today, and thank you to the interpreters. Thank you, Hannah and Dev and this session is now adjourned.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]