ICANN84 Readout

Highlights & Take-Aways from the Annual General Meeting in Dublin (25–30 October 2025)

Top-Level Highlights

- RDRS: Consensus on six recommendations; authentication debate; GAC pushes for mandatory participation.
- Next Round: GAC concerns on Applicant Support, fees for confirming geoTLDs, and diacritics; registries organising pre-round support; At-Large emphasises capacity-building.
- DNS Abuse: Narrowly focused PDPs; call for transparency; operational and regulatory challenges discussed via World Café.
- WSIS+20: Multistakeholder engagement strengthening; ccTLD–government coordination encouraged.
- SSAC: Key report on open-source dependencies; ongoing work on AI language diversity and ICP-2 revisions.

The ICANN84 Readout opened with a warm welcome from **Lars Steffen**, Head of Digital Infrastructures, Resilience & International, eco Association, who highlighted that this was the 27th ICANN Annual General Meeting and the fifth anniversary of the eco–ICANN Readout collaboration.

The session was co-hosted by **Adam Peake,** Senior Manager, Global Stakeholder Engagement, ICANN, who stood in for Christopher Mondini. The full panel of speakers were drawn from ICANN's Supporting Organisations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), and constituency groups:

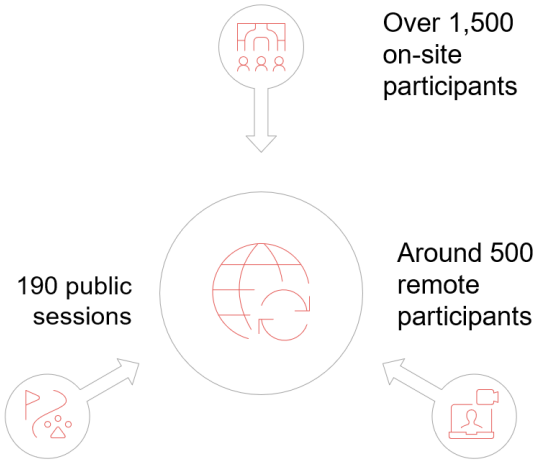
- **Elizabeth Bacon**, Chair of the RySG, TCCM
- **Nicolas Caballero**, Chair of the GAC
- **Nacho Amadoz**, Vice-Chair of the GNSO Council
- **Alejandra Reynoso**, Chair of the ccNSO Council
- **Philippe Fouquart**, Chair of the ISPCP
- **Joanna Kulesza**, ALAC Liaison to the GAC
- **Ram Mohan**, Chair of the SSAC

ICANN Acronyms frequently used in this report:
ALAC - At-Large Advisory Committee
ASO AC - Address Supporting Organization Address Council
ccNSO - Country Code Names Supporting Organization
CSG - Commercial Stakeholder Group
GAC - Governmental Advisory Committee
GNSO - Generic Names Supporting Organization
ISPCP - Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers
RySG - Registries Stakeholder Group within the GNSO
SSAC - Security and Stability Advisory Committee
TCCM - Technical Community Coalition for Multistakeholderism (TCCM)

A moment of silence was held at the start of the Readout to honour the memory of community colleague **Rubens Kühl**.

1. ICANN84 Overview

Adam Peake, Global Stakeholder Engagement, ICANN, provided an overview of the AGM logistics. The event was relocated from Muscat, Oman to Dublin, Ireland with only 117 days' notice, requiring exceptional operational work. He hailed the tenth -anniversary return to Dublin as a full success.



The week featured about 190 public sessions, roughly 1,500 on-site and ~500 virtual participants from 129 countries, with Fellows and NextGen cohorts predominantly from the Asia–Pacific region.

Peake also highlighted WSIS+20 engagement, the ICANN Grant Programme (≈US$10m initial tranche for 23 applications), and recognition of outgoing leaders.

New Board members, **Constance de Leusse, Greg DiBiase,** and **Raúl Echeberría**, were formally welcomed.

2. RDRS and Urgent Requests

Key Message

- Standing Committee reached consensus on all six recommendations.

2.1 Status of the RDRS pilot and standing committee recommendations

Thomas Rickert, Director, Names & Numbers, eco Association, opened with an update on the Registration Data Request Service (RDRS). The Standing Committee reached consensus on all six recommendations, including continuation of the RDRS, phased authentication (starting with law enforcement), system enhancements, optional ccTLD participation, and selective integration of prior SSAD recommendations. He also noted the debate over whether authentication should remain voluntary.

2.2 Timelines for urgent requests

A longstanding EPDP Phase 2 gap resulted in new draft language for urgent request timelines. **Thomas Rickert** explained that contracted parties would need to respond within 24 hours, with a possible 48-hour extension under exceptional circumstances.

2.3 GAC perspective

Nicolás Caballero, Chair, Governmental Advisory Committee, emphasised that the GAC supports a permanent, centralised disclosure mechanism with mandatory participation. He also encouraged open source development for the system.

2.4 IGO/NGO protections

Nacho Amadoz, Outgoing Vice Chair, GNSO Council, summarised the longstanding work on IGO/NGO protections, now focused on how reserved names interact with the Applicant Guidebook's string similarity reviews. He described the process as a lesson in ICANN's procedural complexity.

Thomas Rickert underlined the importance of interpreting Board correspondence constructively.

3. Next Round of gTLDs

Key Messages

- GAC concerns focus on fairness, clarity, and accessibility.
- Registries preparing support and guidance mechanisms for applicants.
- At-Large highlights capacity gaps for underserved communities.
- Operational delays could impact readiness.

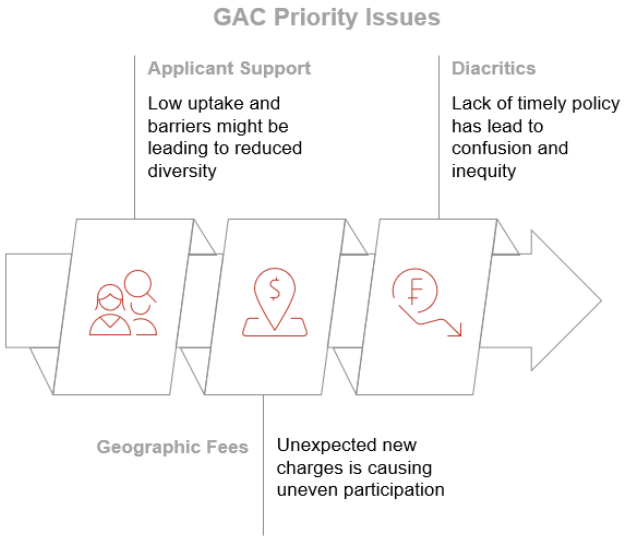
3.1 GAC Concerns: Applicant support, geographic names, and diacritics

Nicolás Caballero offered a more detailed and nuanced explanation of the GAC's three primary concerns, emphasising how each of these issues could materially affect the fairness, accessibility, and overall credibility of the next round of new gTLD applications. He elaborated that the **Applicant Support Programme (ASP)** – originally designed to help organisations from underserved or economically constrained regions – had not delivered the expected uptake, even after extended deadlines and increased outreach. Several GAC members are worried that structural barriers, complicated application requirements, and insufficient guidance may be

preventing potential applicants from participating effectively. He emphasised that improving the ASP is not simply a procedural matter but a necessary step to increase global representation in the DNS.

Moving to **geographic names**, **Caballero** noted that new fees proposed by ICANN Org for geographic name evaluations caught many governments by surprise, as similar reviews in the 2012 round did not incur additional charges. He stressed that such fees could disproportionately affect smaller regions or local authorities with limited budgets. This, he said, could unintentionally skew the application landscape toward wealthier jurisdictions unless clearer justifications and narrowed fee triggers were provided.

On **Latin diacritics**, **Caballero** expanded on the GAC's linguistic and cultural concerns. He highlighted that diacritic bearing-names such as *Asunción* or *Québec* are part of national identities, yet the underlying policy work is unlikely to conclude before the 2026 round. Without interim solutions, he warned that applicants may face uncertainty or inconsistent handling of equivalent strings. Overall, **Caballero** reiterated that the GAC seeks predictable, transparent rules to ensure that all applicants – regardless of geography or language – are treated fairly.



3.2 Registry participation and applicant engagement

Elizabeth Bacon, Chair, Registry Stakeholder Group; TCCM Representative, expanded on the registries' proactive preparations for the next application round. She explained that re-establishing the **New TLD Applicant Group** is intended not only to provide guidance but also to create a structured on-ramp for organisations unfamiliar with ICANN processes. Many prospective applicants lack an established network within the ICANN community, making early engagement essential. The group will help interpret policy requirements, connect applicants with relevant experts, and provide a platform for raising emerging concerns as the AGB is finalised.

Early coordination reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings or last-minute application challenges. **Bacon** explained that the registries want to avoid repeating the sense of isolation felt by many first-time applicants in 2012, who often entered the process without a clear understanding of expectations or community norms.

3.3 At-Large focus on end user capacity building

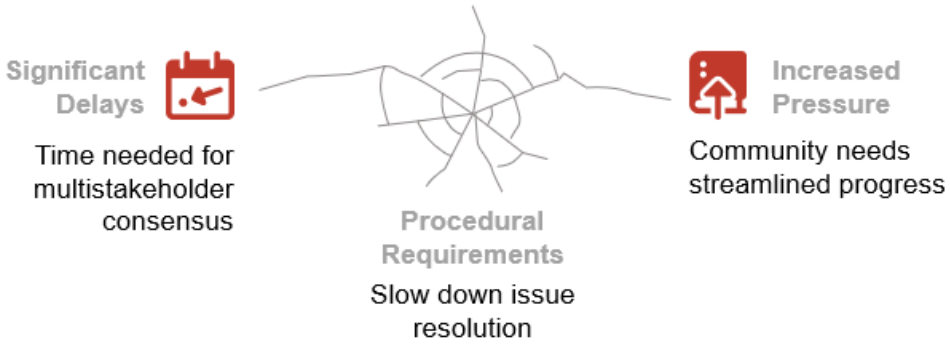
Joanna Kulesza, GAC Liaison, At-Large Advisory Committee, expanded on why applicant support must include not only financial but also broad-based **capacity-building efforts**. She highlighted that communities At-Large represents – especially

underserved or grassroots groups – often face steep learning curves. Many potential applicants lack legal support, technical expertise, or the familiarity with ICANN processes needed to complete a viable application. Without targeted training, she cautioned, the next round may again be dominated by large, well-resourced actors who already possess such capacities.

She added that At-Large has initiated its own feedback and listening sessions to better understand barriers faced by potential applicants in different regions. **Kulesza** emphasised that more collaboration with ICANN's GSE team would be welcome, as shared efforts could significantly broaden participation and improve regional balance.

3.4 Operational considerations

Nacho Amadoz elaborated on his concerns regarding operational readiness. He noted that delays in the **Registry Service Provider Accreditation Process** could compress preparation timelines for many aspiring operators. Furthermore, unclear communication around registry system testing – combined with a recent testing failure – raised alarms within the community. He explained that such issues not only undermine confidence but also risk cascading delays across applicant planning cycles, especially for smaller organisations with limited margins for unexpected procedural changes.



3.5 Policy development process challenges

Philippe Fouquart, Chair, ISPCP Constituency, offered an expanded reflection on the diacritics PDP and what it reveals about ICANN's broader PDP timelines. Even issues which appear narrowly scoped or technically straightforward can take years to resolve due to procedural requirements and the need for multistakeholder consensus. He warned that this pattern may affect other policy areas linked to the next round, increasing the pressure on the community to find streamlined yet inclusive ways to progress essential work. **Fouquart** concluded that the diacritics discussion could serve as a useful case study for future PDP improvements within the GNSO.

4. DNS Abuse

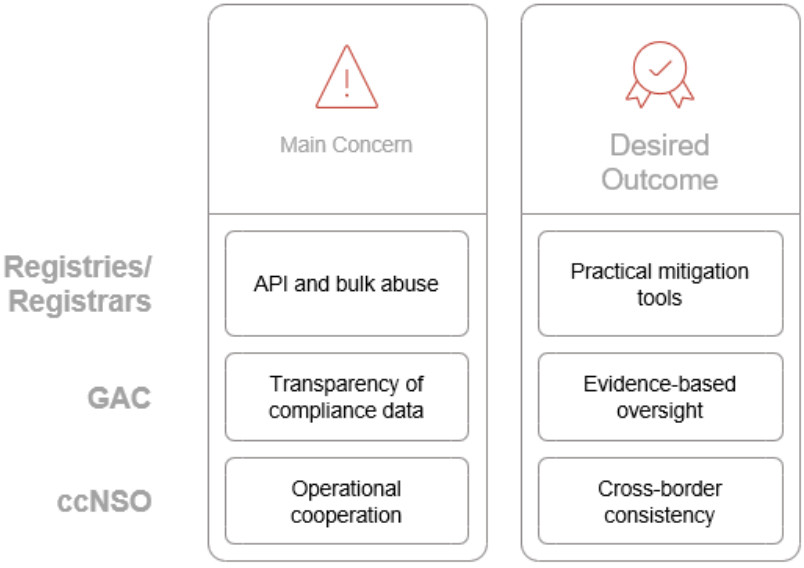
Key Messages

- Focused PDPs aim to accelerate practical mitigation tools.
- DNS abuse viewed as a credibility test for ICANN.
- GAC emphasises need for standardised compliance data.
- Multistakeholder World Café produced actionable insights.

4.1 Contractual changes and PDP planning

Elisabeth Bacon provided a more expansive explanation of the ongoing contractual changes and the complementary PDPs designed to strengthen the community's ability to mitigate DNS abuse. She clarified that the narrowly scoped PDPs – centred on API abuse mitigation and the treatment of related domain names after an abuse report – were intentionally limited in scope to ensure that work could progress more quickly than in traditional, broad PDPs. **Bacon** emphasised that API misuse, including automated domain generation patterns and fraudulent bulk registrations, represents one of the most significant operational challenges currently facing contracted parties. By sharpening the PDP focus, the GNSO aims to enable faster development of clear, implementable policy tools.

Thomas Rickert added more context about PIR's NetBeacon Institute, explaining that its research and recommendations have contributed substantially to identifying specific abuse behaviours and establishing uniform definitions. He noted that this kind of evidence-based analysis is particularly valuable for the GNSO Council as it seeks- to balance targeted policy changes with community consensus. He emphasised that supporting data – especially around clusters of related domain names – will help refine the future policy recommendations emerging from these narrowly tailored PDPs.



4.2 Cross-community views

Philippe Fouquart expanded on his earlier comments, stressing that DNS abuse represents not only a policy challenge but also a test of ICANN's credibility in the eyes of the broader technical and commercial communities. He noted that several stakeholders, particularly within the commercial sector, feel increasing pressure to demonstrate that the ICANN model can deliver timely, measurable results in high priority areas. **Fouquart** emphasised that if the community cannot produce effective outcomes on DNS abuse – an issue with broad consensus – then confidence in ICANN's multistakeholder processes may be affected.

Nicolás Caballero reinforced the GAC's view that accurate, standardised, and machine-readable compliance data from ICANN Org is essential to advancing evidence driven policy. He added that governments require reliable datasets to understand emerging abuse patterns, assess risk, and verify that contracted party obligations are working as intended. He stressed that increasing transparency in these data flows would not only support the GAC's work but also strengthen the legitimacy of any future policy recommendations.

4.3 GAC–ccNSO Session on DNS Abuse

Alejandra Reynoso (Chair, ccNSO Council) offered a more detailed account of the joint GAC and ccNSO session, explaining that each of the five discussion stations enabled participants to explore DNS abuse challenges from different operational and regulatory perspectives. Topics included AI driven detection tools, the unique risks posed by bulk domain registrations, and the complexities of analysing abuse patterns within large domain portfolios. She described how discussions on national scam frameworks revealed substantial variation in regulatory approaches across jurisdictions, underscoring the need for better cross border cooperation. She also highlighted the growing interest in trusted notifier models, where vetted third parties can alert registries and registrars to abuse more efficiently.

Reynoso concluded by noting that a comprehensive written summary – capturing the nuances of each discussion round – will be produced and shared publicly, ensuring that the ideas generated during the session inform ongoing policy work and community dialogue.

5. Review of Reviews

Key Messages

- ICANN's review system is considered too heavy and slow.
- Community seeks a streamlined, flexible model.
- At-Large and ccNSO emphasise the need for tailored review processes.

5.1 Rethinking ICANN's review framework

Elisabeth Bacon outlined the cross-community effort to modernise ICANN's review architecture, expanding on why this reform has become increasingly urgent. She explained that many of ICANN's foundational reviews – such as the Accountability and Transparency Review (ATRT) and the Competition, Consumer Trust and Consumer Choice Review (CCTRT) – were originally conceived at a time when the organisation was much smaller and its policy landscape less complex. As ICANN's workload and global responsibilities have grown, these review processes have become heavier, slower, and more resource intensive. She noted that several review cycles have experienced significant delays, in part because their mandates can be extremely broad, making the work difficult to complete within reasonable timelines.

To address these challenges, **Bacon** described how the community is now working toward a more streamlined, flexible framework that maintains accountability while reducing unnecessary burden on volunteers and staff. This includes exploring new mechanisms for narrowing the scope of future reviews, better coordinating outputs across SOs and ACs, and ensuring that recommendations are both implementable and aligned with ICANN's strategic priorities. She encouraged all community members to participate in the ongoing public webinars and consultations, emphasising that broad engagement is essential to shaping a sustainable long-term approach to ICANN's review ecosystem.

5.2 At-Large and ccNSO perspectives

Joanna Kulesza stressed that any redesign of ICANN's review processes must take into account the distinctive structure and operating model of the At-Large community. She explained that At-Large represents a globally distributed network of individual Internet users and At-Large Structures, which requires unique coordination and capacity building efforts. As a result, applying a one size fits all review model can inadvertently overlook the specific ways in which At-Large participates in ICANN's policy development work. Previous At-Large reviews demanded extensive restructuring and consultation, and she encouraged the community to ensure that any future review cycles remain sensitive to these realities.

Alejandra Reynoso added that for the ccNSO, demonstrating procedural agility is equally important. She explained that country code top-level domains (ccTLDs) operate within diverse national contexts, each with its own regulatory, cultural, and operational constraints. Review systems must support this diversity while still enabling the ccNSO to adapt its processes when necessary. She underscored that building trust in ICANN's evolving review model will require transparency, clarity, and a commitment to reducing process related friction across the community.

6. WSIS+20 Discussions

Key Messages

- ccTLDgovernment collaboration essential for WSIS+20.
- Technical community increasingly recognised in UN-led processes.
- At-Large and GAC strengthening alignment.
- Multi-stakeholder sounding board seen as a model for future UN work.

6.1 ccNSO session with Ambassador Lokaale

Alejandra Reynoso summarised the ccNSO's session with Ambassador Lokaale, extending her explanation to highlight how his guidance carries broader strategic relevance for ccTLDs worldwide. She noted that Ambassador Lokaale emphasised not only the value of maintaining communication with national governments but also the importance of establishing predictable, structured channels for doing so throughout the WSIS+20 process. **Reynoso** explained that many governments are still developing their internal positions on digital policy, and ccTLD operators can play a pivotal role by sharing operational perspectives, technical realities, and lessons from daily registry management. By strengthening collaboration early, she said, ccTLDs can help shape national contributions to WSIS+20 in ways that safeguard the stability, security, and openness of the Internet.

6.2 Technical community engagement

Elisabeth Bacon highlighted TCCM's strong engagement with WSIS+20 cofacilitators and expanded on why this engagement has become increasingly important. She explained that technical community representatives have been working to ensure that WSIS-related discussions accurately reflect the realities of operating global Internet infrastructure. **Bacon** added that the co-facilitators' recognition of the technical community as a distinct stakeholder is a welcome development, as it affirms the need for evidence based and technically sound contributions. She noted that without this visibility, proposals emerging from the WSIS+20 process risk overlooking operational feasibility, potentially leading to recommendations that conflict with established Internet standards or best practices.

6.3 At-Large/GAC collaboration

Joanna Kulesza described ongoing bilateral meetings between At-Large and the GAC on regulatory matters, emphasising the value of aligned messaging but expanding on how this collaboration functions in practice. She explained that both groups have been sharing perspectives on user rights, cybersecurity, digital inclusion, and the role of public authorities in shaping Internet policy.

Kulesza noted that these exchanges help each group understand the other's priorities and identify where their advocacy naturally overlaps. Through this coordination, At-Large and the GAC are better able to present cohesive, user-focused guidance to the wider ICANN community and to policymakers engaged in WSIS+20related discussions.

6.4 Multi-stakeholder sounding board

Adam Peake noted the openness of WSIS+20 cofacilitators and expanded on the role of the multistakeholder sounding board as a model for future UN processes. He explained that this mechanism provides a structured space for diverse stakeholder groups – including technical experts, academics, civil society, industry, and governments – to share timely feedback in iterative cycles. He emphasised that this is a significant improvement over traditional consultation models, which often limit nongovernmental contributions or confine them to late-stage processes. The sounding board's design encourages transparency, fosters meaningful dialogue, and demonstrates how global policy development can benefit from inclusive, multistakeholder input. **Peake** suggested that this approach could serve as a valuable precedent for incorporating expert and community perspectives in future international digital policy negotiations.

7. SSAC Update and ICP-2 Revision

Key Messages

- SSAC highlights critical role of open-source software in DNS stability.
- Report warns against regulations misaligned with open-source development.
- ICP2 revisions introduce stress tests and degraded-mode procedures.
  2 Revision

7.1 SSAC report on open source software

Ram Mohan (Chair, Security and Stability Advisory Committee) presented the SSAC report *"The DNS Runs on Free and Open Source Software."* In expanding upon the report's significance, he explained that the DNS ecosystem depends heavily on a diverse range of opensource components – from resolvers and authoritative server software to libraries and security tools. Because of this, any regulatory environment that assumes software behaves like commercial, proprietary products risks creating requirements that are incompatible with collaborative, community driven development models. **Mohan** cautioned that poorly tailored regulations could slow security updates, discourage global contributors, or introduce compliance burdens that small opensource teams cannot feasibly meet.

He further elaborated that the report seeks to educate policymakers, emphasising how the global stability of the DNS relies on openness, transparency, and the rapid, volunteer driven innovation that characterises open source communities. He noted that another core theme of the report is resilience: open source ecosystems enable broader peer review and faster identification of vulnerabilities.

Beyond the report, **Mohan** shared additional updates about SSAC's involvement in DNS abuse related PDPs, explaining that SSAC experts are contributing operational insights to ensure policy proposals align with real-world security practices. He also expanded on an emerging SSAC initiative focused on **AI language diversity**, which aims to identify the minimum linguistic datasets required for AI based tools to support accurate and biasfree processing across different writing systems. According to **Mohan**, this work is becoming increasingly relevant as AI-assisted tools play a larger role in security, content moderation, and user accessibility functions.

7.2 ICP-2 governance document

Philippe Fouquart provided a more detailed summary of the ongoing revisions to ICP2, explaining that the document – originally developed to define recognition criteria for Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) – now requires updates to reflect lessons learned over the past two decades. He noted that recent governance challenges in some RIR regions, including episodes of leadership instability and resource management disputes, prompted the community to assess whether the original criteria could be strengthened.

Fouquart elaborated that the revised ICP2 will introduce new **stress tests**, designed to evaluate how an RIR's governance model performs under pressure, and new **degraded-mode procedures**, which outline expectations for continuity and accountability when an RIR experiences operational difficulties. These additions, he said, are intended to increase transparency, help maintain trust across the global numbering community, and ensure that the RIR system remains robust and stable even when individual organisations face internal challenges.

eco's **Lars Steffen** closed the session by thanking speakers and participants, noting that the next Readout will follow ICANN'S 2026 MEETING IN MUMBAI.

The recording of the ICANN84 Readout is available to watch here:
https://youtu.be/oPVdTbIZNzQ

Abbreviations used in this document: ALAC – At-Large Advisory Committee • API – Application Programming Interface • ASO AC – Address Supporting Organization Address Council • ccNSO – Country Code Names Supporting Organization • CSG – Commercial Stakeholder Group • DNS – Domain Name System • EPDP – Expedited Policy Development Process • FOSS – Free and Open Source Software • GAC – Governmental Advisory Committee • GNSO – Generic Names Supporting Organization • ICANN – Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers • ICP2 – Internet Coordination Policy 2 • ISPCP – Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers • NextGen – Next Generation • PDP – Policy Development Process • RDRS – Registration Data Request Service • RIR – Regional Internet Registry • RSP – Registry Service Provider • RySG – Registry Stakeholder Group • SAC – Security and Stability Advisory Committee Report • SO/AC – Supporting Organization / Advisory Committee • SSAD – System for Standardized Access/Disclosure • SSAC – Security and Stability Advisory Committee • TCCM – Technical Community Coalition for Multistakeholderism • WSIS+20 – World Summit on the Information Society +20