ICANN75 Readout – Highlights & Take-Aways from the Annual General Meeting (24th): A Short Summary

On 28 September 2022, eco – Association of the Internet Industry and ICANN – Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers held a joint ICANN75 readout to summarize and discuss selected topics from the 24th Annual General Meeting, which took place in Kuala Lumpur from 17 to 22 September 2022. Speakers from different constituencies of the ICANN community provided an overview of the highlights and key take-aways of the hybrid ICANN75 meeting.

The ICANN75 readout was moderated by **Lars Steffen**, Director eco International, and was co-hosted by **Christopher Mondini**, Vice President, Stakeholder Engagement & Managing Director, Europe ICANN Org, and **Thomas Rickert**, Director Names & Numbers at the eco Association.

Reports from the constituencies were provided by: **Chris Disspain**, Council Member of the ccNSO; **Philippe Fouquart**, the outgoing Chair of the GNSO Council; **Matthias Hudobnik**, Member of the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC); and **Manal Ismail**, Chair of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC). **Sebastian Ducos**, the incoming Chair of the GNSO Council, sent his apologies for not being able to attend the readout.

In commencing the online readout, Christopher Mondini provided an initial overview of the [ICANN75 AGM](). In total, 1,957 participants from 112 countries took part in the meeting, 1,165 of whom attended the AGM on location in Kuala Lumpur, with an additional 792 attending remotely. The AGM naturally encompassed both Board elections and changes in leadership. ICANN's new Chair of the Board is Tripti Sinha, currently based in University of Maryland in the United States, while the Vice-Chair is Danko Jevtoci from Serbia. Tobias Sattler was also elected as a member of the Board of Directors of the Public Technical Identifiers (PTI). The following aspects were highlighted by Mondini as key factors of the AGM:

- The Board approved the ccNSO policy on the retirement of the country codes that are no longer needed or which no longer exist;
- A day was dedicated to universal acceptance and work on internationalized domain names, which has been in operation now for 20 years;
- A celebration took place regarding the work into the generation of labelling for various scripts: in acquiring 22 alphabets, this has involved thousands of voluntary hours from almost 50 countries over the past 12 years;
- Detailed discussion took place on a future round of generic top-level domains (TLDs);
- A plenary session ensued on Internet fragmentation, a concept that needs to be uniformly clarified;
- A concluding session was held on governmental and regulatory activities, involving a strong focus on the initiatives of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the EU institutions, as well as highlighting influential markets such as China and India, where close monitoring is occurring on various data protection or cybersecurity legislation;
- The Dr. Tarek Kamel Award for Excellence in providing training and capacity building was awarded to Wolfgang Kleinwächter.

Following on from Mondini's overview, high-level summaries were subsequently delivered by the panel.

Philippe Fouquart commenced with an overview on a recent design paper formulated by a Small Team on the [System for Standardized Access/Disclosure](#) (SSAD). The current state of play focuses on the ticketing system, provisionally called the **WHOIS Disclosure System**. Two salient elements emerging from exchanges at the AGM constitute the identified need for a quick Board decision, and the need for significant support from the registrars in order to make sure that the system would be availed of. Manal Ismail proceeded to highlight the importance of engaging in education and outreach with potential requesters to enable them to learn of the system's availability. Thomas Rickert, who is also a member of the Small Team, proceeded to note the value of introducing the likes of "pitch decks" to encourage contracting parties to participate in this voluntary phase and to require the requesters to ideally use the [WHOIS Disclosure System](#) path in a legal capacity.

The next topic that Philippe Fouquart focused on was the **Accuracy Scoping Team**. This team had been asked to consider whether accuracy-related changes to contracts were necessary, and had been tasked with four assignments. After a number of inevitable delays during the pandemic times, the team submitted a report to the Council before the ICANN75 meeting, with this comprising the first two assignments and two proposals: a survey and an audit. From the GAC perspective, Manal Ismail commented on the importance of encouraging the widest possible participation of registrars in the registrar survey and the need to swiftly conclude the data protection agreement between ICANN and the contracted parties.

In a **retrospective on his role as Chair of the GNSO Council**, Philippe Fouquart offered two particular observations on the challenging pandemic times. Firstly, the fact that, despite there having only been two on-site meetings over the course of his first two years as Chair, options such as small teams and virtual operators led to surprisingly good functionality. Secondly, the Council had managed to initiate multiple policy development processes (PDPs) and to approve a number of final reports. This has led to a growing awareness in the Council of the need to engage with all parties for implementation purposes, with this to be achieved through PDP Improvement Trackers and small teams.

Manal Ismail proceeded to discuss **GAC updates**. Having confirmed GAC's new leadership, their new Chair, Nicholas Caballero from Paraguay, will commence his role after ICANN76 for a term of three years, while five vice-chairs have also been confirmed. In total, 76 GAC members and six observers attended the ICANN75 meeting, while Saudi Arabia was welcomed as the newest member. The GAC membership now amounts to 180 member states and territories and 38 observer organizations. At the AGM, it was reported that GAC provided an overview of the DNS and key GAC topics such as trends of new gTLDs, DNS Abuse and WHOIS, and also circulated a survey to assess the pertinence of the sessions for future capacity building activities. At the meeting, GAC encouraged the ICANN Board and community as a whole to explore new and additional actions that should aim to contribute to bridge the digital inequalities, to ensure that all opportunities regarding the application of gTLDs are equally shared among all regions, and to promote a more balanced distribution of new gTLD applications, registrations and registrars.

Chris Disspain commenced his readout with a remark on the new **ccNSO DNS Abuse Standing Committee**: rather than being a reporting mechanism, the goal of this committee is to gather information from ccTLDs about how they deal with DSN Abuse in their own territories, with the intention of offering ccNSO best practice. He subsequently referred to the **ccNSO policies**. Citing the current ccTLD retirement policy as an example, he noted that it is one of four ccNSO policies, all of which demonstrate a key difference between the GNSO or the gTLD community and the ccTLD community. Within the latter community, policies are not set for ccTLDs, but instead are those that

ICANN is expected to follow – such as how to deal with delegation or re-delegation of the ccTLD, how to deal with retirement, etc. On the topic of **general policymaking**, Disspain also indicated that ICANN is now more inclined to request the European Commission to embrace responsibilities. The final point made by Disspain concerned the hot topic of **DNS Abuse** and a related draft proposal on behalf of the Registry Stakeholder Group: this proposal is apparently to involve the initiation of a tightly focused contract amendment process to enhance the DNS Abuse mitigation requirements in the Registry-Registrar Agreement.

In the next phase of the readout, Thomas Rickert provided an overview of two of the topics which the incoming Chair Sebastian Ducos had been set to cover. The first of these related to a recent strategic planning session on the **topic of prioritization**. One of several sample actions cited was that of ICANN's recommendation for a GDS liaison to participate in the PDP Working Group in order to help inform the community about implementation work that needs to be prioritized. The second topic concerned that of the **Small Team on DNS Abuse**. Four team recommendations for the Council were: 1) working on malicious registrations; 2) requesting the Registrar Stakeholder Group and others to explore the role that bulk registrations play in DNS Abuse; 3) DNS reporting, involving a continued dialogue between contracted parties and DNS Abuse reporters; and 4) reaching out to the Registrar Stakeholder Group to share the findings of the Small Team and request feedback on how these actions can be enforced.

The follow-on readout was presented by Matthias Hudobnik, who offered his perspectives on the plenary session on **Internet fragmentation**, which he regarded as having demonstrated an alignment by ALAC, GAC, and ICANN on different fragmentation issues. While Hudobnik emphasized that the fragmentation debate is clearly not new, geopolitical tensions are seen to have strongly impacted the Internet ecosystem over the last decade. While there were multiple interpretations of fragmentation at the plenary, two particular scenarios were predicted at the session: firstly, the bifurcation of the Internet as a result of strategic competition between the US and China, leading to a potential technological "Cold War"; and, secondly, the potential concept of the "federated Internet," involving a network of national states linked by the Internet protocol, but separated to a greater extent. Such scenarios led to serious concerns over the stability and predictability of the Internet system. While Hudobnik argued that the open and universal Internet has thus far shown a remarkable resilience, fragmentation is creating serious concerns, leading to the question which needs to be subsequently addressed: Should the ICANN community act on a proactive or reactive level?

In closing his readout, Matthias Hudobnik also touched on **At-Large's current and future involvement in policy**. Policy work will include the next round of applications for new gTLD bodies, either in terms of the examination of operational design assessment or for subsequent procedures upon which ICANN will rely. At-Large will also be involved in parallel processes that will contribute to the implementation of the next round of applications – for example, the Dialogue on Closed Generics.