ICANN80 Readout
Highlights & Take-Aways from the Policy Forum

On 26 June 2024, eco – Association of the Internet Industry & ICANN – Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers hosted a joint ICANN80 Readout to summarise and discuss selected topics from the ICANN80 Policy Forum, which was held in Kigali, Rwanda, from 10-13 June 2024.

The ICANN80 Readout was moderated by **Lars Steffen**, Head of International Digital Infrastructure and Resilience at the eco Association, and was hosted by **Adam Peake**, Civil Society Engagement Sr. Manager at ICANN, and **Thomas Rickert**, Director Names & Numbers at the eco Association.

Reports from the constituencies were provided by:

- **Susan Mohr**, GNSO / CSG, Vice-Chair of the ISPCP

- **Chris Disspain**, ccNSO, Council Member of the ccNSO

- **Claire Craig**, ALAC, Vice Chair of ALAC

- **Nicolas Caballero**, GAC, Chair of the Governmental Advisory Committee

- **Greg DiBiase**, GNSO, Chair of the GNSO Council

- **Ram Mohan**, SSAC, Chair of the SSAC

ICANN80 in Short

Adam Peake, Civil Society Engagement Sr. Manager at ICANN, gave a comprehensive overview of the key highlights and outcomes from the ICANN80 Policy Forum. The session was well-attended with over 1,000 participants from 123 countries and territories.

ICANN80 was a High-Level Governmental Meeting, the first of its kind in six years due to interruptions from COVID-19, and was a collaboration between the GAC and the Rwandan government. Approximately 50 delegations, including ministers and government representatives, focused on Internet accessibility and emerging technologies in Africa.

[Kurt Erik "Kurtis" Lindqvist was announced as the new CEO and President of ICANN](), known for his long-standing contributions to Internet technologies and connectivity, with previous leadership roles at LINX and Netnod.

Discussions in the geopolitical sessions called for greater collaboration between ICANN, governmental bodies, and other stakeholders to address global Internet governance challenges. These sessions covered legislative developments and policy recommendations concerning the domain name system, including efforts to combat counterfeiting and to protect intellectual property rights.

Adam also highlighted ongoing initiatives aimed at promoting Internet development in Africa, termed the [Coalition for Digital Africa](). This initiative seeks to utilise ICANN's convening power to foster Internet development across the continent.

Geopolitical Update & Global DNS Capacity Building

There are several important developments happening in the United Nations sphere:

1. The [review of the 2005 UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS),]() which took place 20 years ago and led to the creation of the Internet Governance Forum and activities around multi-stakeholder processes.
2. The upcoming [Summit on the Global Digital Compact](), which will be discussed in an upcoming webinar.
3. The [Open-Ended Working Group on Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Negotiations]() roundtable in New York in May.
4. The World Telecommunication Standards Authority (ITU) is discussing the location of the 2025 [Internet Governance Forum](), with Oslo in Norway being considered as the potential host.
5. The OECD Secretariat is making proposals to its advisory groups (Internet Technical Advisory Group, Business Advisory Group, and Civil Society Advisory Group) to study how organizations like ICANN support the security and availability of the Internet, using an economic lens to focus on funding models.

Susan Mohr, Vice-Chair of the ISPCP, reported on the ISPCP's active involvement with the Government Engagement team, highlighting their efforts to better understand and disseminate information about ICANN's role within the multi-stakeholder model. This has been instrumental in educating ISPCP members, providing them with key information to support discussions with government stakeholders and advocate for the multi-stakeholder approach. The ISPCP has also developed its own policy position on Internet fragmentation and has provided input on the implementation of the global Digital Compact. While the ISPCP is not an advocacy group, it has adopted a pragmatic approach in its submissions and policy documents to reinforce the importance of the multi-stakeholder model.

Susan also discussed the successful collaboration between the ISPCP and the ICANN Technical Engagement team, which launched a series of training sessions focusing on DNS-related topics. The first session, DNS 101, attracted over 300 registrants and nearly 100 participants. The constructive feedback received during ICANN80 will inform future webinars. Upcoming webinars will cover the DNS ecosystem and the collaboration between ICANN and ISPCP, with dates soon to be announced. Additionally, there are plans for an in-person workshop at ICANN81 in Istanbul.

Adam Peake expressed appreciation for the work Susan and the ISPCP are doing and highlighted the importance of promoting various topics central to ICANN's mission, including DNS abuse, through initiatives like the [Domain Metrica project](). He emphasized the collaborative efforts in hosting webinars and educational sessions, encouraging the wider community to participate and engage. Adam reiterated that ICANN is willing to provide speakers and resources to further educate and support the community in securing the Internet and promoting responsible use of the DNS.

ccNSO Session on Strengthening Multistakeholder Voices

Chris Disspain, Council Member of the ccNSO, reported on the session on Strengthening Multi-stakeholder Voices in Internet Governance. He highlighted a division within the ICANN community regarding the multi-stakeholder model. Some members advocate for promoting the model as a universal solution for all aspects of Internet governance, while others believe ICANN should focus solely on defending its own model for issues directly relevant to ICANN. He also noted concerns among many community members about ICANN's current stance on not leading the community in Internet governance discussions, particularly regarding WIS+20, the Global Digital Compact, and the future of the IGF.

DNS Abuse: Closer cooperation between ccTLDs and gTLDs

Chris noted the unique occurrence of a joint session between the registry stakeholder group of the GNSO and the ccNSO, focusing on DNS abuse and the amendments to registry and registrar agreements. The goal was to foster greater cooperation among different stakeholders within ICANN, highlighting efforts to bridge communication gaps and reduce operational silos. He noted that this collaboration could lead to shared best practices and better coordination across different types of registries, aiding in addressing DNS abuse more effectively.

In this context, **Claire Craig**, Vice Chair of ALAC, reported on the "Safe Cyber Campaign," a project developed in collaboration with ESA to disseminate information about cybersecurity, specifically focusing on phishing. This initiative aims to provide pre-packaged materials for regional At-Large organisations to share with their constituencies. The campaign, introduced at ICANN80 in Kigali, has been well-received and is designed to be easily delivered in various forums, including libraries, and will be available in multiple UN languages. The project is ongoing and will continue to be refined with community involvement.

Results of the HLGM

Nicolas Caballero, Chair of the GAC, shared his key takeaways from Kigali. It was noted that the growth of domain numbers in the region could lead to increasing DNS abuse challenges. Instances of phishing in the financial sector across Africa were highlighted. Recent amendments to the DNS abuse contract for gTLD registries and registrars are expected to positively impact the mitigation of DNS abuse in Africa.

Updates are anticipated from ICANN Compliance regarding the implementation of these contract amendments and from the Security and Stability Advisory Committee concerning their ongoing work on name collisions and their potential effects on future rounds of gTLDs and further DNS abuse mitigation efforts.

He emphasised the need for stronger alignment between the outcomes of the WSIS+20 (World Summit on the Information Society +20) and the discussions at the GDC (Global Digital Compact). The HLGM in Kigali highlighted the need for a balanced approach in which governments collaborate with stakeholders to address emerging issues like disinformation and

cybersecurity threats, such as the "five knights of the Apocalypse", as he called them: phishing, pharming, botnets, malware, and spam.

Board Discusses Auctions of Last Resort

Additionally, Nicolas discussed the GAC's guidance on the mechanisms of last resort and the resolution of contention sets for new gTLDs. The GAC advises against the use of private auctions in resolving contention sets and calls for a community-wide discussion to explore other methods.

Applicant Support based on GAC Advice

On the topic of applicant support, he outlined the GAC's recommendations to ensure fair and equitable processes for all applicants, especially those from underserved regions. This includes finalizing decisions on support program applicants at the end of a 12-month period rather than on a first-come, first-served basis, inviting community members with relevant expertise to participate in the evaluation process, and initiating dialogues to potentially allow new gTLDs supported through the ISP to operate their own backend services. He also mentioned plans to develop a comprehensive report detailing the outcomes of the engagement and the outreach initiatives planned for the upcoming months.

Martin Sutton raised a concern about the timeline for applicant support candidates. He questioned the decision to wait until the end of the 12-month period before evaluating any applications. This could disadvantage candidates who pass early in the process, as they would have less time to access pro bono services and other resources necessary for preparing their applications, compared to those evaluated later.

In response, **Nicolas Caballero** acknowledged that it was indeed a point to be discussed further with the full GAC in future meetings. He stressed the importance of not giving preference to early applicants to ensure fairness, particularly for underserved regions.

Claire Craig pointed out the need for a balanced evaluation process that considers the specific challenges faced by underserved nations. Claire also noted ongoing discussions about best practices for evaluating applications, emphasizing the importance of early and effective outreach and engagement strategies for all potential applicants.

Board Letter on Urgent Requests

Greg DiBiase, Chair of the GNSO Council, discussed ongoing considerations within the GNSO about urgent data disclosure requests, originally proposed to have a response time not exceeding a certain number of business days. However, the ICANN Board raised concerns about the time frame, particularly where authentication of law enforcement requests is required—a time-consuming process without a standardized system across different registrars and agencies. Consequently, the Board has requested the GNSO to reassess this recommendation and possibly consider a new policy or different approach that appropriately balances swift responses with thorough authentication.

Addressing Nicolas Caballero's question on authenticating requesters, Greg acknowledged the complexities involved. The scope of ICANN policy development regarding the authentication of law enforcement might need clarification, involving how responsive policies can be while ensuring robust verification procedures are in place.

Discussion on Data Accuracy

Greg also touched upon the topic of data accuracy, highlighting the hiatus in work due to the absence of a data protection agreement between ICANN and contracted parties which complicates the sharing of registration data for accuracy assessment. Even with such an agreement, ICANN recently indicated the incapacity to collect bulk data for accuracy evaluation under current data protection regulations, prompting the GNSO to explore alternative methods for gathering necessary data and potentially reassessing whether policy development is the appropriate tool for addressing such issues.

Discussion on Privacy Proxy Services

In addition, Greg provided updates on privacy proxy services, noting that previously adopted recommendations are under review in light of GDPR implications, with an implementation review team revisiting these policies to determine necessary amendments.

Transfer Policy

Claire Craig added to the conversation by affirming the smooth progression of the transfer policy workstream and highlighting discussions around the recommended duration for domain lock periods post-registration or transfer, which sparked significant debate during ICANN80. She stressed the importance of community feedback, especially on contentious topics like the duration of domain locks, to ensure comprehensive community input is reflected in the final policies.

Name Collision Analysis Project

Ram Mohan, Chair of the SSAC, provided an extensive update on the activities and initiatives of the **SSAC** during ICANN80 in Kigali. He emphasized the SSAC's ongoing revitalisation and its efforts to diversify its membership in terms of gender and to better reflect the global community it serves.

Ram discussed the publication of the report on the Name Collision Analysis Project by the SSAC, which emphasizes that name collisions in the new gTLDs round pose a significant security and stability risk to the Internet naming system. The SSAC urged ICANN to create a framework for analysing and mitigating these risks. Concerns were also raised about the privacy implications of analysing name collisions, as such analyses could involve personally identifiable information (PII). The SSAC recommended that ICANN should handle the privacy risks associated with this data, rather than outsourcing it to applicants as previously done.

Ram advocated for a cautious and thorough approach to delegating new TLDs, suggesting that ICANN takes the time and resources needed to ensure safety and stability in the process. He emphasized the importance of conducting these analyses responsibly and maintaining a collaborative and constructive dialogue within the community to address these significant issues.

DNSSEC

Ram also discussed the concerns surrounding **DNSSEC** within the SSAC, focusing on its value and utility versus the potential fragility it introduces to the DNS infrastructure. Ram pointed out that almost every major TLD globally has experienced issues with DNSSEC, particularly when updating signatures, leading to significant disruptions like entire zones going dark, which can be catastrophic since it prevents domain names from resolving.

Ram mentioned that the SSAC is considering a formal evaluation of DNSSEC to determine if the benefits of continuing its implementation outweigh the risks and complexities it introduces. He highlighted the appalling lack of adequate tools and systems to help registries and registrars effectively implement and manage DNSSEC, which adds to the challenges.

In response to Ram's detailed explanation, **Nicolas Caballero** agreed with the assessment and emphasized the need for collaboration within the ICANN community to promote the adoption of DNSSEC. He suggested that workshops or capacity-building efforts could be beneficial in sharing good practices and approaches to enhance DNSSEC implementation.

Rafael Pinata from PhishFort asked if there were possibilities for collaboration with entities or enterprises to detect and take pre-emptive measures against DNS abuse. Ram responded that while the SSAC itself is not operational and primarily focuses on analysis and providing advice, the wealth of connections and networks among SSAC members could be utilized for collaboration.

Dimitri Dimitrov inquired about effective strategies to tackle abuse related to bullet-proof hosts, offshore hosting providers, and DMCA-proof providers, especially those operating from jurisdictions with lax legal enforcement. Ram explained that, within the ICANN ecosystem, the burden of enforcement often lies with contracted parties who are generally diligent in responding to legally served requests. However, he acknowledged the complexities introduced by jurisdictional variations.

Greg DiBiase added that recent amendments aimed at giving ICANN compliance more authority are steps towards ensuring that all registrars, regardless of their geographical location, meet higher standards to combat DNS abuse. This aims to provide a level playing field across geographies, ensuring consistent enforcement and adherence to policies intended to reduce DNS abuse.

RDRS & PICs/RVCs

Thomas Rickert, Director Names & Numbers at the eco Association, gave a brief update on three topics before wrapping up the Readout. The [Registration Data Request Service](#) (RDRS) aims to improve collaboration between requesters and registrars. There have been issues with request quality, causing delays and non-disclosure. Training is being provided to streamline the process and enable swift, legal data disclosure through RDRS. This is crucial as RDRS is still in a pilot phase, but it is hoped the system will continue beyond this initial period.

Public Interest Commitments and Registry Voluntary Commitments ([PICs/ (RVCs](#)): Certain TLD registries want to restrict their domains to specific types of content to ensure they are used appropriately. However, the ICANN board has clarified that they will not accept provisions in the registry agreements for new gTLDs that would position them as content regulators.

He also responded to a question on data leakage. Many registries are considered critical infrastructure in their jurisdictions, which requires them to take measures like penetration testing and contingency planning. Players in the domain industry are expected to make significant efforts to ensure that no unauthorized parties can access or compromise their data through leaks, trading, or encryption. While this information is not directly tied to ICANN policy, it highlights the broader security and data protection measures being taken by key players in the domain industry.

The recording of the ICANN80 Readout is available for eco members [here](#).