

Middle East ICANN Engagement Strategy Proposed Terms of Reference

Background and Purpose

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) was founded in 1998 to coordinate at a global level Internet naming and numbering resources. Through its Global Partnerships team, ICANN has been working closely with stakeholders in regions around the world to strengthen participation in its processes. This effort by Global Partnerships team has resulted in increasing participation in ICANN constituencies, including from the Middle East region. Over the past six years, several ccTLD managers and governments in the Middle East have joined ccNSO and GAC respectively; few At-Large structures have been approved; one organization joined the ISP constituency of GNSO; many individuals have been participating in various constituencies and working groups. The Middle East community has been particularly engaged in IDN related work, including IDN ccTLD Fast Track, ccNSO policy development process, as well as projects in relation to IDN Variants.

Under the current leadership of ICANN, internationalization of the organization and globalization of engagement is becoming a cornerstone of all initiatives going forward. Starting with Africa, a regional strategy was developed as a result of a meeting between African community and ICANN leaders at ICANN 44th meeting in Prague. A working group was created and endorsed by African community to work on an initial plan to be presented at the ICANN 45th meeting in Toronto. Following the presentation in Toronto, ICANN has started working on the implementation plan. At the same time, similar efforts have been taking place in regions like Latin America and key countries like Brazil and India, aiming at strengthening ICANN engagement in there. More work is currently underway considering similar approach of strategic engagement in other regions.

ICANN has recently engaged in numerous discussions with Middle East community members at a number of meetings including the Arab IGF in Kuwait, ICANN 45th in Toronto, and IGF in Baku. It was clear from the various discussions that ICANN needs to effect more engagement with the Middle East community. An example of such engagement was articulated at the Arab IGF meeting where some participants suggested to initiate a community effort to look into the domain names industry in the Arab region, analyze the challenges facing this industry, and provide practical recommendations on what measures to be taken to advance it.

Discussions continued in Toronto with community members who were not present at the Arab IGF, and they provided similar feedback to what was received in Kuwait. At the IGF meeting in Baku, ICANN leadership had meetings with ministers and high-level government officials of UAE, Qatar, Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia. During those meetings, ICANN shared its plan to invite Middle East community members to develop an ICANN engagement strategy in the region. Feedback was quite positive, and there was consensus that the strategy should focus on the priorities for the

Middle East with regard to ICANN and its role, and should identify a set of action items in the form of activities and projects for ICANN to implement in partnership with stakeholders in the region. The goal is to finalize the strategy and announce it at the ICANN 46th meeting in Beijing.

Objectives

Foster two-way engagement between ICANN and the Middle East community at various levels:

- Grass root engagement with community members, including organizing, sponsoring and participating in events and activities in the region; promoting Internet multi-stakeholder governance model; encouraging effective participation in ICANN processes, including in filling positions on Board and SO/AC; encouraging more participation in the Fellowship Program.
- Formal relationships with key stakeholders including through agreements, exchange of letters, MOUs, etc.
- High-level relationships at leadership level between ICANN and key stakeholders in the region.

Identify areas of mutual interest to engage in, along with related projects and partners required for implementation:

- Capacity building programs: technical programs in DNS related areas, Internet policy and governance programs, IANA internship, etc.
- DNS industry development: business development through incubators, and centers of excellence in areas pertaining to DNS.

Working Modality

A Working Group shall be created of Middle East community members who have been active in ICANN and other Internet policy processes. The WG should reflect balance in stakeholder representation and geographical diversity. The Group shall work primarily through email and tele-conferences, and if needed, a face-to-face meeting can be organized. ICANN shall support the WG, and facilitate its work.

Scope of Work

The WG shall develop a 3-year strategy focusing on ICANN engagement in the Middle East, as well as a 1-year action plan identifying specific projects and activities to be undertaken. The WG shall seek feedback on its work from the wider community in the Middle East.