REPORT TO THE CROPP COMMITTEE by APRALO LEADERS – Holly Raiche and Ali AlMeshal

Events: Inaugural Armenian Internet Governance Forum (armIGF) 7-8 September 2015 and International Conference for ccTLD registries and registrars of CIS, Central and Eastern Europe (TLDCON) 9 - 10 September 2015

Sponsors:

- **CROPP (Airfares, 2 nights' accommodation and per diem)**
- **ARMENIAN IGF (2 nights accommodation)**
- **SELF-FUNDING (additional expenses)**

Holly and Ali are very grateful to both the CROPP Committee and to the Armenian IGF for the opportunity to meet and network with people from the three Armenian ALSs and other Forum participants. We are also grateful for the additional nights' accommodation from armIGF that allowed Ali and Holly to attend the first day's session of the TLDCON, and hear first hand of the participants' issues with ccTLDs and the new gTLD program.

Trip Goals (as per CROPP application)	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
1. Provide APRALO leaders with a better understanding of the Armenian Strategy and its relationship to ICANN activities			
2. Promote an understanding of the interactive multi-stakeholder ICANN ecosystem in Armenia			
Proposed Outcomes (as per CROPP application)			
3. Raised awareness of ICANN and APRALO by Armenian IGF community			
4. Raised awareness and understanding about the Internet environment in Armenia			
5. Increased participation by the Armenian community in ICANN activities due to their better understanding of how ICANN policy development works.			

NOTES

1. **Provide APRALO leaders with a better understanding of the Armenian Strategy and its relationship to ICANN activities.**

Two of the Forum opening speeches provided Holly and Ali with a very good background on Armenian Internet Strategies and how they relate to ICANN activities:

- The opening address by Gagik Tadevosyan, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communication
- The Multi -Stakeholder model of Internet Governance for Armenia, by Igor Mkrtumyan , VP of ISOC Armenia

(*Igor Mkrtumyan - 2nd from left, next to Gagik Tadevosyan and, giving his address, Michael Yakushev*)

The Forum sessions and discussion also provided both Holly and Ali with a very good understanding of the Armenian Internet strategies to ICANN issues including sessions on:

- The new IDN for Armenia
- Universal Acceptance issues in the region
- Issues of child safety, research and IP issues
- SMEs in Armenia – their use - and non-use - of domain names (including whether Armenia's new IDN will spur additional use of domain names)

Both Holly and Ali were also able to attend the first sessions of the TLDCON, which included lively discussions on new GTLDs in the region. The opening session was on the management of the relevant ccTLDs including statistics on resident and non-resident use of the ccTLDs. The next session on new gTLDs, 'Broken Expectations: New Domain Statistics update', included statistics on new gTLDs, their take up and processes. There was also discussion on their 'success', whether 'success' is measured by the numbers, and the need to look at the target registries/registrants of the names as well. Other issues included defensive registrations/speculative registrations. Some suggested success indicators could include rate of renewals and usage figures.

There was some comment that it had been a great idea, but poor implementation, with complaints about changes in the rules, including new requirements on registries, questioning whether registries are responsible for monitoring registrars and name usage.

The issue of registries for children was also discussed including management of inappropriate material on domains.

Lessons to be learned included improvement on search mechanisms, clarity for the registrar channel, and on implementation, the issue of costs (and whether communities were served) and the idea that ICANN should have been more involved at the beginning.
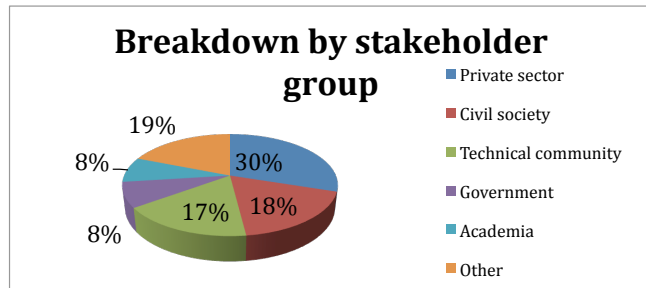
2. Promote an understanding of the interactive multi-stakeholder ICANN ecosystem in Armenia

The Forum Round table, led by Gagik Tadevosyan, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communication, on Armenia's Internet Governance Council (IGC), was particularly valuable. In the session, the Deputy Minister explained the Government's view on the role that the IGC could play in the Government's development of Internet policy. This was followed by lively discussion on the relationship of this IGF to ISOC and to the IGC. This provided an excellent opportunity to explain ICANN's role and functions and how they would fit into the governing Internet structures being developed by the Armenian government and other Armenian organisations including ISOC-Armenia and the Armenian IGF.

3. Raised awareness of ICANN and APRALO by Armenian IGF community

Holly and Ali helped raise awareness of both APRALO and ICANN. Their profile in giving keynote addresses (discussed below) showcased their positions within APRALO and ICANN. They also used both the formal Forum sessions and informal meetings to meet with Forum participants and discuss Internet issues including APRALO and ICANN. Brochures about ICANN and APRALO were also available.

The address by Michael Yakushev, VP for Stakeholder Engagement in the region – talking on ICANN accountability and the IANA transition also raised awareness of ICANN issues.

There were over 190 participants at the Forum, with all stakeholder groups represented. All three ALSs based in Armenia either provided presentations and/or actively participated in the discussions.

4. Raised awareness and understanding about the Internet environment in Armenia

The focus of the ArmIGF was on current Internet Governance issues globally.

The recent FCC's statement on the Open Internet puts network neutrality onto the list of Internet 'hot topics'. Holly's presentation outlined the ways in which the term is used in different jurisdictions, resulting in different understandings of the term. She discussed the FCC Order in more detail, including its background and provisions. She then discussed the Australian regulatory framework that gives 'network neutrality' a different meaning for that jurisdiction. The following panel presentations and discussion highlighted the differing ways the term is being used in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe, including implications for its use in Armenia.

Another 'hot topic' for the Forum was e-Security. Ali's keynote focussed on e-security in financial transactions. As Ali noted, with the growth of online payment and payment providers there is a growing number of fraud concerns and techniques used by fraudsters globally. He then outlined best practices in managing those concerns globally and, in particular, how the concerns can be dealt with in an eastern European context.

ArmIGF was well covered by the media including radio, TV and the Internet and was webcast by ISOC-NY. (*links to the coverage – in Armenian – can be provided*)

5. **Increased participation by the Armenian community in ICANN activities due to their better understanding of how ICANN policy development works.**

As per Note 3 above, both Holly and Ali gave presentations on current Internet issues and engaged in discussions about APRALO and ICANN in both the formal and informal Forum events, and in the beginning sessions of TLDCON. Their involvement clearly raised the Forum participants' understanding of ICANN policies and processes.
However, it is not possible, at this stage, to gauge whether that will result in increased participation by the Armenian community in ICANN activities so the success of this objective can only be judged over time.

OBSERVATIONS

- Working with the Armenian Internet Governance Council: It is clear from the Deputy Minister's participation in the IGF, and the Round Table discussion that the IGC will play a critical role in the development and implementation of Internet policy and ICANN and the Armenian ALSs should participate in those discussion
- The interest of the three Armenian ALSs in was clear through their attendance/participation in the Forum. ICANN can play an important role in both informing them about ICANN issues and encouraging their participation through such mechanisms as webinars or CROPP funding to support their further involvement in Internet and ICANN issues
- Most of the participants of the Forum (and TLCCON) spoke Russian and many of the participants/speakers also spoke English – both official UN languages. However, a great deal of the actual work of ICANN is in English. Participation of eastern European countries in ICANN could be enhanced with increasing the use of interpreters into all seven UN languages (particularly Russian for eastern European countries) and translation of important ICANN documents into all seven of the languages.