New Middle East Strategy Working Group
Minutes of Meeting – Call 2 | Monday 28 October 2019

The new working group in charge of developing ICANN's new engagement strategy for the Middle East had their second teleconference call on Monday 28 October at 11.00 UTC.

On the call, we had *Hadia Elminiawi, Ahlam Abu-Jadallah, Fouad Bajwa, Nabil Alkhamery, Noha Abdelbaky, Pooya Teimoory, Waddah Almoghalis, Zakir Ben Rahman*, and *Rafik Dammak*. And from ICANN staff, the call had *Baher Esmat* and *Magali Jean*. We had noted apologizes from *Walid Alsaqaf, Nadira Alaraj*, and *Fahd Batayneh*.

The agenda for the call was to cover two main topics: 1) The Strategy Charter, and 2) The Next Steps for the New Strategy.

Strategy Charter

The Charter of the current running SWG was shared with the New SWG over email. And during the first call of the SWG, it was touched upon very briefly as it was raised by some on the call. ICANN Staff then shared an amended version of the Charter to go in line with the New SWG, and asked the New SWG to share any feedback/input/comments they have before the second call. There are 5 items in the Charter that need to be debated and finalized:

1. **Name of the Strategy Working Group**
   The current running strategy is called Middle East and Adjoining Countries SWG (MEAC-SWG). Obver the mailing list, the majority of who responded suggested naming it "Middle East SWG", while two others suggested the name "MEAC-SWG". There was one suggestion to name it "MENA SWG", and one suggestion to rename the entire ICANN region as per GSE definition. As a way forward, it was suggested to name the new SWG as "MEAC-SWG" and share this over the mailing list. And if no objections are raised, we will go with the name of MEAC-SWG.

2. **Term of the Strategy**
   Discussions over the mailing list suggested a 5-year strategy to go in line with the term of ICANN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. Those on the call agreed to this. Thus, the term of the strategy will run for 5 years starting from 1 July 2020 all the way until 30 June 2025.

3. **Chair and Vice-Chair**
   The Charter suggested having a Chair and a Vice Chair. There was a suggestion over the mailing list to have 2 Vice Chairs instead of one. Some on the call suggested that having 2 Vice Chairs could complicate communication and add difficulties and challenges. It was agreed to keep a Chair and a Vice Chair as it has been for the past 4 years, and to warp this discussion up over the mailing list before the end of this week.

4. **Membership and Observers**
   According to the charter of the current running SWG, the SWG can have members and observers. The difference between the two is that observers can comment on the work done by the SWG,

but they are not expected to participate in the activities of the WG, and cannot vote. The majority on the call were in favor of keeping the model as is; i.e. with members and observers.

5. **Open Membership vs. Closed Membership**
   For the current running SWG, membership is open for anyone relevant to join at any time. So long as the WG is still mandated, anyone is welcome to join the WG. The New SWG agreed to keep it open but with some conditions such as 1) open periodic membership after each ICANN meeting, and 2) New members not to revisit and hinder discussions already debated and finalized. It was suggested to amend the Charter to include this change.

Next Steps for the New Strategy

In developing the new strategy, 3 pointers were suggested as a start:

1. **ICANN 2021-2025 Strategic Plan** - The WG will have to consider the focus areas and objectives. Based on questions and discussions that the WG will undertake, the WG can come up with ideas and proposals.
2. **Current Regional Strategy Due to End in 2020** - The current regional strategy has 3 strategic objectives. The WG was previously advised to read the current strategy as something useful can be found as a guideline for the SWG.
3. **Trends and Challenges Foreseen in the Region** – Have such a discussion in relation to ICANN, the DNS, etc. that you can identify in the Middle East. From those trends and challenges and the use of other pointers, you can start drafting/brainstorming regional strategic objectives. You may want to consider getting feedback from the wider community, you may want to conduct a regional survey from the wider community to know what the priorities are, what the trends are, etc. At the end of January, we should have a draft strategy to share with the wider community for their inputs.
   ICANN Staff will share with the SWG the regional survey that was conducted in the past. ICANN Staff can also help drafting a survey if needed. New SWG members suggested to revisit this as they are ongoing their current work of drafting a new strategy.

New SWG members were encouraged to continue the discussions over email.

Any Other Business (AoB)

The New SWG members on the call were asked of the relevance of the date and time of the call. There were no objections, and so it was agreed to have a call every Monday at 11.00 – 12.00 UTC until further notice.

The next call for the SWG will be right after ICANN66 in Montreal; Monday 11 November at 11.00 – 12.00 UTC.

The call was adjourned.

Follow-Up Items

1. Circulate an email to see if there are any objections in naming the New SWG "**Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group (MEAC-SWG)**"
2. Circulate an email to see if there are any objections to having one Chair and one Vice-Chair for the New SWG
3. Amend the Charter to allow members and observers to join the SWG, but can join the SWG after ICANN meetings only
4. ICANN Staff to share annual regional surveys conducted in the past
5. ICANN Staff to share a meeting invite for the next call on Monday 11 November at 11.00 – 12.00 UTC.