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AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

AFRALO Statement on ICANN Africa Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025

Introduction

On 15 April 2020, Public Comment opened for [ICANN Africa Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025](#). On the same day, an At-Large [workspace](#) was created for the statement. The African Regional At-Large Organization (AFRALO) leadership decided it would be in the interest of end users to develop an AFRALO statement on the Public Comment, from the Regional At-Large Organization (RALO) perspective.

ICANN policy staff in support of the At-Large community sent a request for comment to Seun Ojedeji, African Regional At-Large Organization (AFRALO) Chair. The AFRALO Chair agreed it would be relevant to their RALO to issue a statement on the Public Comment, affecting all countries in their region.

ICANN policy staff in support of the At-Large community sent a request for volunteers to form a drafting team to the AFRALO regional mailing list. Raymond Mamattah, Individual Member of AFRALO, Sarah Kiden, AFRALO Secretariat, and Hadia Elminiawi, ALAC Member of AFRALO, volunteered to form the drafting team of the AFRALO statement. The AFRALO Chair joined the drafting team. Staff created a Google Doc for drafting purposes.

During [May At-Large Consolidated Policy Working Group \(CPWG\) meetings](#), the drafting team presented to the CPWG the discussions and draft of the AFRALO statement.

On [18 May 2020](#), the drafting team also presented the draft to the newly formed At-Large Operations, Finance and Budget Working Group (OFB-WG) of the ALAC Subcommittee on Finance and Budget (FBSC).

On 25 May 2020, the drafting team revised the AFRALO statement with feedback from the CPWG and staff sent a final call for comments to the AFRALO mailing list.

On 27 May 2020, the drafting team finalized the AFRALO statement with feedback from the AFRALO community.

On 27 May 2020, the ALAC Chair, Maureen Hilyard, requested that the statement be transmitted to the ICANN Public Comment process, copying the ICANN staff member responsible for this topic, with a note that the AFRALO statement is pending formal ratification and endorsement by the ALAC.

AFRALO Statement on ICANN Africa Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025

We, members of the African Regional At-Large Organisation (AFRALO) community have been closely following the development of the plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025. First, we would like to commend all those that worked on the development of the draft, especially the 25 individuals member of the African Strategy Working Group (ASWG) 2020 and ICANN Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE) team for Africa. The regional strategic plan development which was initiated by the GSE team from our region has become a standard that is applied in other regions and we are particularly happy to note that this has brought about improved visibility within our region and more importantly we are happy to be part of the development as a community. In view of this, we would like to present the following views about the draft proposal on ICANN Africa Regional Plan for the Fiscal Years 2021-2025 that is currently up for public comment, with the hope that they will be considered when finalising the draft plan:

1. **Security:** It has been predicted that the next generation of Internet users will be from developing economies, many of which are in the African region. It is, therefore, important to continue to promote open Internet standards and we are glad to see that this has been included. However, we hope that this will not just be limited to the Internet engineering standards but also to other efforts that contribute to free and open Internet such as the open data, open government, etc. We believe that ICANN can contribute towards this while staying within its mission.
2. **ICANN Governance:** A true multi-stakeholder environment can be achieved when there is equal opportunity to participate. However, we recognise the challenge that it may not be possible to fully achieve this but we are happy that there is a plan to further bridge the gap. In implementation of the goals stated in section 3.2.2 of the draft plan, we once again offer to the GSE team AFRALO membership, which consists of At-Large Structures (ALSes) and individual members spread across the continent who can serve as a resource towards improving ICANN governance through community engagements within their communities. We encourage the GSE team to continue to leverage upon the existing resources within the ICANN community who are in our region whenever a need presents itself. ICANN meetings have only held in 3 countries in the entire continent of over 50 countries, yet the benefit of hosting such meetings is mutual; in order to improve participation, we encourage the GSE team to look into how they can realistically support other countries who express interest to host such meetings to become a reality.
3. **Unique Identifiers System:** As has been rightly noted, a significant number of upcoming Internet users will be from Africa, with an increased need to rely on the Internet for daily sustenance due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important to actively ramp up efforts on improving the unique identifiers system. We appreciate the regional goals enumerated in the plan which already cover areas of importance but we would suggest that this particular objective be prioritized as it will be more required than ever going forward.
4. **Geopolitics:** As we know, there have been cases of partial or total Internet shutdowns in certain parts of the region and this has negative impacts on the entire economy, including the Domain Name System (DNS). While we understand that this is outside ICANN mandate and do not encourage ICANN to be involved in country government decision making, we encourage ICANN to use the existing governmental platforms (some of which have been listed in the plan) to create awareness and education with the goal of reducing such occurrences. We, therefore, support and look forward to the outcomes listed in the plan.

5. **Financials:** We observed that increasing the number of registrars/registries within the region is no longer on the plan, while this was the case in previous plans. We, however, believe that this is still work in progress and should continue to be in the plan to better improve the DNS economy and business within the region.

In addition to the comments above, we suggest that the 5 overall strategic objectives be assigned weighted priority and expected timelines to enable proper understanding of the focus and better tracking.

Finally, we would like to inform you that the AFRALO/APRALO collaborated to respond to the [public comment request](#) on Middle East and Adjoining Countries (MEAC) Strategy 2021-2025. We suggest that there is continued coordination between the team and sync among the strategies.