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AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ALAC Statement on Enhancing the Effectiveness of ICANN's Multistakeholder Model - Next Steps

Introduction

On 04 June 2020, Public Comment opened for [Enhancing the Effectiveness of ICANN's Multistakeholder Model - Next Steps](#). On the same day, an At-Large [workspace](#) was created for the statement. The At-Large Operations, Finance and Budget Working Group (OFB-WG) decided it would be in the interest of Internet end users to develop an ALAC statement on the Public Comment, as a follow up to prior ALAC statements regarding ICANN's Multistakeholder Model (see: [13 June 2019](#), [14 October 2019](#)). Marita Moll, ALAC Member of the North American Regional At-Large Organization (NARALO), Abdulkarim Oloyede, ALAC Member of the African Regional At-Large Organization (AFRALO), Joanna Kulesza, ALAC Vice Chair and ALAC Member of the European Regional At-Large Organization (EURALO), and Sebastien Bachollet, Chair of EURALO, volunteered for the drafting team of the ALAC statement.

On [12 June 2020](#), Marita Moll initiated comments on the [workspace](#) and OFB-WG mailing list. Substantial input was received from drafting team members as well as Holly Raiche, ALAC Member of the Asian, Australasian and Pacific Islands Regional At-Large Organization (APRALO).

On [08 July 2020](#), after gathering initial feedback from the At-Large community, Marita Moll presented [At-Large points of consensus](#) for the ALAC statement to the OFB-WG.

On [28 July 2020](#), Marita Moll shared the first draft of the ALAC statement. ICANN Policy staff in support of the At-Large community posted the draft to its workspace and issued a call for comments on the OFB-WG and ALAC mailing lists. The [same day](#), the drafting team presented to the OFB-WG for their review. No additional comments were received.

On 29 July 2020, the OFB-WG Chair and drafting team decided that the statement could move to the ALAC for ratification before submission to ICANN Public Comment. ICANN Policy staff in support of the At-Large community and the drafting team finalized the ALAC statement.

On 31 July 2020, the ALAC Chair, Maureen Hilyard, requested that the statement be ratified by the ALAC.

On 02 August 2020, staff confirmed the online vote resulted in the ALAC endorsing the statement with 10 votes in favor, 0 votes against, and 0 abstentions. Please note 66.67% (10) of the 15 ALAC Members participated in the poll. The ALAC Members who participated in the poll are (alphabetical order by first name): Abdulkarim Oloyede (voted manually after poll close), Carlos Raul Gutierrez, Dave Kissoondoyal, Joanna Kulesza, Jonathan Zuck, Justine Chew, Marita Moll, Matthias Hudobnik, Maureen Hilyard, and Sylvia Herlein Leite. 5 ALAC Members, Bastiaan Goslings, Holly Raiche, Humberto Carrasco, Javier Rua-Jovet, and Tijani Ben Jemaa, did not vote. You may view the result independently under: <https://www.bigpulse.com/pollresults?code=1339821fkHM6PZbdgEVHqenS7Z9>

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The At-Large community is pleased to follow up on its prior ALAC statements regarding ICANN's Multistakeholder Model (see: [13 June 2019](#), [14 October 2019](#), [February 2020](#)) with this ALAC statement on Enhancing the Effectiveness of ICANN's Multistakeholder Model - Next Steps. The At-Large community and its At-Large Advisory Committee, composed of 15 ALAC Members representing 5 regions around the world, represent the interests of the global Internet end user community within ICANN.

1. Priority Issues vs. "Low-Hanging Fruit"

At-Large is concerned about the current ranking of issues that remain before us. We note that the final six issues identified by the community as essential to the evolution of ICANN's Multistakeholder Model have now been re-ranked into three priority issues and three "other" issues. In contrast, the previous request for comment related to this issue (see: [ALAC statement on Draft FY21-25 Operating & Financial Plan and Draft FY21 Operating Plan & Budget](#)) asked the community to identify issues that were already being addressed in some way, that could be considered "low hanging fruit", and others that were more fundamental and would have to be approached in more holistic ways. We think it is important to retain that original representation of these issues.

Within the six remaining issues, we would describe the issues "Prioritization of Work/Efficient Use of Resources" and "Precision and Scoping the Work" as "low hanging fruit". We are sensitive to the fact that bandwidth to deal with issues is limited and that issues like prioritization and scoping are already being addressed in various other processes. However, that does not cause other issues on the list to become less important. We emphasize that all six of these issues, having already been culled from a list of 21 issues, are "priority issues." All six issues must be addressed in order to have a meaningful evolution of the Multistakeholder Model.

We note that community participants are invited to initiate their own actions to help address additional work areas. Regrettably, framed this way, this no longer feels like a community-wide push to improve the system, but an invitation for single constituencies to "go at it alone." For overstretched, under-resourced, volunteer-based stakeholder groups, this is not a viable way forward.

In order to restore the balance of attention to priority issues, At-Large seeks a timeline that would see all issues addressed by the end of the current 5-year ICANN Strategic Plan.

2. Moving Out of Silos

We reiterate our message in previous submissions ([February 2020](#), [October 2019](#), [June 2019](#)) that ICANN's Multistakeholder Model cannot evolve without a holistic review of roles and responsibilities within the system. At-Large questions a structure where the registries/registrars, non-commercial and business communities make the policy decisions, whereas the security, government and end user communities can act in their advisory roles only and do not participate in the final decisions - in short, where some of the multistakeholders are "more equal than others". This is fundamental in addressing the problem of silos and trust.

In [our response to the ATRT3 Report](#), we supported the recommendation to evolve both specific and organizational reviews as per **Section 8** of the final report:

- 1.1. with the creation of a Holistic Review to allow a global view of ICANN various structures and their relations,

- 1.2. with the pause of specific reviews,
- 1.3. with a common process (with possible adaptation by each SO/AC/NC) aimed towards ensuring continuous improvement of the ICANN community and the multistakeholder governance model it represents.

We believe that this would result in a uniform process aimed towards ensuring continuous improvement of the ICANN community and the multistakeholder governance model it represents, as per Section 8 of the ATRT3 Final Report. If there is one holistic review, then the more important issues of silos, complexity and trust have to be addressed, particularly the silos - raising questions about cross community dialogue and how to support it.

3. Restoring Recruitment and Demographics

With respect to consensus, representation and inclusivity, we are concerned about the omission of the closely related topics of demographics and recruitment. The footnote at the bottom of page 4 states: "The Business Constituency, in its public comments regarding the work plan, suggested a seventh topic - Recruitment and Demographics. As there was no other support for the inclusion of this topic, it has not been fully explored as part of this project." We find this puzzling.

In its response to the [October 2019](#) request of comments, At-Large contributed quite a number of suggestions towards supporting and growing active and concerned stakeholder participation. We spoke of representativeness/inclusiveness and demographics/recruitment in terms of partner issues. In its follow up response, ([February 2020](#)), At-Large stated quite clearly that we believe that representativeness/inclusiveness and demographics/recruitment were two interrelated, but different, streams. Although At-Large did not specifically ask for recruitment and demographics to be added as a seventh topic, our comments on these topics over the three consecutive comment papers emphasize our view of the importance of these issues.

The analysis of responses to the requests for comments ought to have taken the ALAC's concerns into account, and found a way to include recruitment and demographics as part of the discussion. We ask that this omission be corrected.

4. Reviewing Previous Responses

In developing our response to this report, we have reviewed our prior responses on the topic and note that we have contributed a great many suggestions already, as have other stakeholder groups involved - on actions and activities that could be undertaken to improve the ICANN Multistakeholder Model. We would like to see more of these suggestions brought forward.

As an example, we previously suggested that ICANN would benefit from engaging professional facilitation services, experts to help diverse groups work in a more purposeful, efficient and effective manner. Such organizations could also help train community leaders on communication and consensus building techniques. Proactive use of such expertise could be used at the start of a potentially contentious process by adding a 1 or 2 day in-person stakeholder's workshop, parsing out issues, sides, sensitivities and looking for potential solutions from day one potentially saving much time and money and distress. Such an approach would also be valuable when addressing a number of the priority issues -- consensus, silos, trust, etc.

To keep track of such suggestions, we request that ICANN staff create and release a document that analyses the suggestions that have already been offered and show how these suggestions fit into the issues that have been identified.

5. Identifying Gaps

To the suggestions we have previously offered as input to the MSM Evolution project, we would like to add the following.

On Prioritization:

We note that the ALAC fully endorses the recommendation to enhance current methods of Prioritization and Rationalization of Activities, Policies, and Recommendations (as per Section 10 of the ATRT3 Report). This needs to be done through a community-led entity tasked with conducting a prioritization process for recommendations made by review teams and cross-community groups.

Prioritization for At-Large starts from the regions, and is then put forward to the SO/AC Chairs. Recognizing that SOs set direction for the work activities, the inputs each region put into that discussion will help prioritize the At-Large workload.

On Complexity:

We suggest that the development of learning materials go beyond webinars and ICANN Learn, with community-driven initiatives such as:

- Schools of Internet Governance (IG);
- Central database for all resources that are being developed regionally and centrally including powerpoint presentations, video recordings, information on respecting copyright and legal issues, etc.

6. Pandemic Related Issues

The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted ICANN processes and the work of staff and volunteers. This will certainly continue to affect our work on evolving the multistakeholder model. However, redesigned processes can offer new perspectives. At the Virtual Public Meetings, there was a significant multistakeholder turnout to the ALAC/At-Large policy sessions. All parties were around the table to discuss solutions, or at least explain what they are doing to address the issues. We suggest that this pattern be continued during future public meetings, Virtual and Face-to-Face. It takes the discussions out of the silos, clarifies the issues, and allows all parties to be heard.

ICANN public meetings should continue to feature policy sessions where ALAC/At-Large is the host, asking the questions, seeking better explanations (thus addressing the complexity issue) breaking down the silos - and in the process, starting to redefine roles.

The ALAC also recommends that ICANN consider making more use of regional Face-to-Face meetings, once we start to emerge from this crisis. This will enable representation and inclusivity by bringing ICANN to a more local regional audience.

7. Evaluation of Success

We agree with the proposal in the current report that the ICANN Board adopt an ongoing evaluation method. A connection with the evaluation of the ICANN Strategic Plan is appropriate. Our suggestion above for a timeline for addressing all six priority issues within the 5 year strategic plan should help with setting objectives within a particular time frame that could then be evaluated.

Subjective metrics such as: “Is there a sense that consensus is better defined and thus more achievable?” are vague and should not be the only measure used.

With respect to accepting “partial progress” on these goals as sufficient to declare the effort a success, we note that a system like ICANN’s multistakeholder system is never perfect and should always be evolving. Declaring “mission accomplished” at any point would be a mistake.