

**Statement of the Non-Commercial Stakeholders Group on the
[Draft ICANN Africa Strategic Plan 2016-2020 Version 3.0](#)**

Introduction

The Non-Commercial Stakeholders Group (NCSG) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the third version of the Draft ICANN Africa Strategic Plan 2016-2020, published 30 July 2018. We would like to acknowledge all the efforts that the Global Stakeholder Engagement team supporting the Africa region made in implementing the actions resulting from the second version of the strategy. We participated in an earlier community consultation on this topic during the first review and we note that our previous comments that we strongly believe would improve the contributions of the African community within the ICANN ecosystem still remain relevant. Such actions include, but are not limited to, increasing the membership of Africans within Supporting Organisations, GNSO Stakeholder Groups, and Advisory Committees, greater participation in Policy Development Process Working Groups, increased participation in ICANN meetings, greater representation in leadership positions, and additional capacity building programs.

The NCSG represents the interests of non-commercial domain name registrants and end-users in the formulation of Domain Name System (DNS) policy within the Generic Names Supporting Organisation (GNSO). We are proud to have individual and organisational members in over 160 countries, and as a network of academics, Internet end-users, and civil society actors, we represent a broad cross-section of the global Internet community which, in fact, includes many African members: a proof of a diversity, that nevertheless needs improvement.

Substantive Comments

This draft strategy is comprehensive and detailed in capturing activities the African GSE has engaged in Africa which has created more visibility to for ICANN work. We will also like to commend the effort in respect of the African DNS market report as captured in the strategic document.

1. The very first concern that we would like to raise is the confusion trait that the naming convention has. Combining both the version number and a period doesn't make the intention of this document very clear. Versioning is usually

used to amend an original document with small or minor changes but the scope, the timeline, and the objectives often remain the same. When a major change is needed, a strategy change in this case, one must issue a completely new document that resets the version number, the time period and the scope of applicability. For instance, the current document has “2016 - 2020” in its name which implies that the strategy will only be valid for the stated period. By the time of its publication, we will probably be in 2019 and there will be only one year left for its implementation. We are not sure that is the intention of the GSE Africa team; otherwise, it makes no sense. Therefore, we suggest naming the document only with a version number and a publication date, given that the document is valid for five years as from the publication date until the next review.

2. We suggest that the document include the budget, all anticipated implementation costs, the human resources, and any financial aspect associated with both articulating and implementing the strategy. For the sake of transparency and accountability, we would like to know how much it costs to draft the strategy and the budget that was spent to implement the projects, the outreach events, and any feature mentioned in the review [report](#) for the five years implementation.
3. Even if the review document is rich in interesting figures about the 5-year implementation plan, it is difficult for us to evaluate its effectiveness. In fact, we do not feel very comfortable with the contents of the aforementioned report and how it has been taken into account to draft version 3 of the Africa Strategic Plan. Although some key parameters were set to measure the actions' effectiveness, no comparative value was proposed in order to assess whether or not the previous implementation was a success or not. This oversight is once again replicated in the proposed updated version subjected to this public comment. For instance, counting the number of workshops or outreach events conducted or the number of people trained (in the reviewed document) without a threshold value does not give any information regarding the success of the plan.
4. Regarding section 3 of the [implementation report](#) (“outreach by categories”), it would have been useful to know in advance the number of events that were planned, and then it would have made sense to compare it to the number that the team was able to conduct. How did those outreach events impact the African community's participation within ICANN, especially in Policy Development Working Groups?

5. Regarding section 4 (“key regional activities”), we are grateful for the number of activities supported by ICANN following the Strategic Plan, but again, how did this support effectively contribute to increasing the contribution of the African community within working groups, GNSO Stakeholder Groups, Supporting Organizations, and advisory committees?
6. Regarding section 5 (“Establishment of the ICANN Engagement Center in Nairobi, Kenya”), the review team claimed that the GSE Africa team has collaborated with SO/ACs including the NCUC, a constituency of the NCSG. We would like to hear more about what kind of collaboration did happen, what leader was **officially** associated, and what is the vision of that Engagement Center vis-a-vis of collaborating with the NCSG.
7. Regarding sections 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 (“Capacity Building Efforts”, “DNS Entrepreneurship”, “Engaging with the Youth in Africa”, “DNS Exchange Program”, and “Government Engagement and Capacity Building in Africa”), we acknowledge the efforts made to conduct all of these activities and thank the GSE team for that since we believe that such activities are important to increasing the contribution of the African community in the development of the DNS ecosystem. However, we are deeply concerned with how they were conducted and how the targets were chosen. Specifically, our concerns are:
 - a. No effort was concretely put towards the collaboration with (or support of) the NCSG and its implications/contribution to the Policy Development Working Groups. Actually, most of the important work of ICANN, especially policy-related issues, is done within PDP WGs and the role of the NCSG is to defend the voice of the community (the random Internet users and non-for-profit organization who all have great interests in the DNS). For example, when the team discussed the aspect of “Participation in SO/ACs” in section 14, **they had no figure on Africans membership within NCSG, other SGs, and PDP WGs under the umbrella of the GNSO.** We believe that it is important to sketch this out since it is where almost all the policy-related issues are dealt with. The GSE Africa team should put more effort to improve the Africa community’s footprint thereof by setting some measurable key performance and success indicators.
 - b. Also, it seems that the GSE Africa efforts focused primarily on the GAC and ccTLDs and there is no plan for collaboration with other Stakeholder Groups, no effort associated with gTLDs, and no direct stimuli for the African community to participate within PDP WGs.

- c. All the capacity building efforts, the DNS entrepreneurship project, the youth engagement, etc. were presented with figures but no mention as to how these figures are effective in achieving the goals or fulfilling the mission of the Strategic Plan. Again, with the lack of comparative values or actions plan following the strategic document no one could be able to correctly assess the effectiveness of the plan.
 - d. Furthermore, the review team repeatedly affirmed that they all contributed to improving participation within the ICANN community, but there is no figure that demonstrates how this improvement is perceptible. For instance, following those actions, how many people from Africa joined the PDP Working Groups and participate effectively? What is the ratio of the Africans membership increase within SGs? How did the trained people contribute back to the community?
 - e. Many efforts were put towards the GAC in order to support the participation of governments representatives to ICANN meeting, but how many efforts encouraged the participation of non-commercial users or any working group member?
 - f. Regarding the section about “Africa DNS Market”, we could not identify how the [comments of the NCSG](#) were taken into account, and once more, we would like to reiterate all of our concerns.
 - g. Finally and above all, no cost and expenses figures were associated with the report. Since we use to request such an information to ICANN Org as well, we will sacrifice to the tradition again and suggest that every project is associated with the details of all estimated and actual costs. This is important for transparency and accountability that we wish within the ICANN ecosystem.
8. With regard to the above mentioned, we would request the drafters to include not only the key parameter measures within the strategic plan, but also some thresholds and success indicators, so that an effective assessment could be conducted at the next review. In the state, no one will be able to evaluate the plan given any figure. An action plan following the Strategic Plan should be developed with operational objectives. An example of operational objective could be to improve the Africa community’s footprint within PDP WG from its current low level (x %) to an acceptable level (y %) within 5 years, with a list of activities that could contribute to achieve that goal.

Conclusion

9. In summary, we remain grateful to the work achieved by the GSE team and encourage them to continue envisioning the better for the DNS ecosystem in Africa. However, we strongly request the reviewers and the drafters to focus more on the places where the most important part of the job is done, i.e within PDP Working Groups and SGs activities. While the GAC is an important stakeholder of this multi-stakeholder ecosystem, we would appreciate that the GSE team treats all stakeholders equally, mainly when it comes to capacity building, organizing outreach events within the continent, and supporting and promoting participation to meetings. Instead of training random people or giving fellowship to people who never contribute to Working Groups afterward, an attention should be given, for instance, to encourage African recipients who (or will) actively participate or contribute to policy-development processes.

10. We propose that:
 - a. The regional strategy to work with members to grow the regional community within NCSG and also in Policy Development and capacity building initiatives.
 - b. The regional engagement team to also endorse and support projects and activities led and proposed by ACs and SOs, especially aligning to the regional Strategy.
 - c. The team to also collaborate locally and regional on outreach and engagement activities to or encompassing non commercial and non technical domain users and registrants.

11. Last but not least, transparency and accountability should be at the center of every step of the implementation of the Africa Strategic plan, therefore; the NGSG requests the GSE Africa team to give all figures related both to drafting the Strategic Plan and to the implementation of the five-years since they are important to judge the effectiveness of the actions conducted, and, consequently, to evaluate the efficiency of the new plan.