

Diversity as an evolving concept – No strict definition

GAC Perspective Proposal Document for the WS2 Community Coordination Group (CCG) consideration

- The Work Stream 2 Recommendation 1.1 regarding the definition of diversity, states:
“SO/AC/Groups should agree that the following seven key elements of diversity should be used as a common starting point for all diversity considerations within ICANN:
 - Geographic or Regional Representation
 - Language
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Physical ability
 - Diverse Skills
 - Stakeholder Group or Constituency”

- In this context, the ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) recognizes that diversity is an evolving concept because the Internet and society in the digital age are not static, hence a strict definition of diversity is not sustainable.
The concept of diversity from a GAC perspective is a dynamic combination of elements that together help strengthen the ICANN multistakeholder model in the full sense of the inclusion of all diverse stakeholders. For instance, the notion of cultural diversity, when considering the impact of the representation of the global Internet community, has to be taken into account as a combination of several of the elements aforementioned.

Elements of Diversity

- a. As per the Annex 1 of the WS2 Final Report¹
- b. As per GAC perspective

1. Geographic/Regional Representation:

- a. WS2 Final Report: Ensures that there is a balanced geographical representation throughout the organization. While already applied to the selection of ICANN board members, discussions have indicated that this criterion should be extended to all levels within ICANN.
- b. GAC perspective: The GAC agrees with the WS2 Final Report approach to ensure a balanced geographic and regional representation, taking into consideration the country of birth, and/or residency and foremost considering not only developed but developing and underserved regions or distinct economies.

2. Language:

- a. WS2 Final Report: All languages should be possible to be represented in ICANN for the organization to position itself as a fully global multi-stakeholder entity. There is a need to improve the balance at least between the six official languages at ICANN: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. However, ICANN manages the IANA functions that offer IDN services to some entities who do not use any of these six official languages, and it is very important that ICANN improve its ability to communicate with this group of stakeholders so that they can be better engaged.
- b. GAC perspective: The GAC agrees with the WS2 Final Report approach. It is of high importance to give the opportunity to users of minor languages to enjoy their right to access information in cyberspace, by promoting the inclusion of new languages in digital ecosystems. Additionally, the GAC believes that language should not only be restricted to a spoken language. For instance, during ICANN Meetings, regular sessions could continue offering closed captioning, while plenary sessions could additionally include sign language. The GAC suggests introducing sign language during plenary sessions, as a pilot project for Community feedback, due to the broader group of participants attending those sessions.

¹ WS2 Final Report (June 2018) <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/ccwg-acct-ws2-final-24jun18-en.pdf>

3. Gender:

- a. WS2 Final Report: Equitable gender representation should be sought at all levels of ICANN. Currently, ICANN's approach to gender is binary: male or female. The representation of women in all areas of ICANN remains a challenge. It is critical that in all official Community roles, equality between genders be achieved. It is no longer acceptable that there be a gender difference of more than 10 percent in the makeup of any leadership group with regard to the community from which it is drawn. It is also important for ICANN to note the evolving issue of equitable consideration of more complex gender identification.
- b. GAC perspective: To the GAC, gender can be viewed as a person's inner perception and go beyond binary, based on how much a person agrees or disagrees with a traditional view of gender as a sociocultural expression of special characteristics, and roles associated with certain groups of people with respect to their gender and sexuality.

The GAC believes that continuous work to make freedom of gender expression and gender equality a reality, while ensuring the removal of barriers to equal participation in ICANN, could guarantee the sustainability of the ICANN multistakeholder model.

4. Age:

- a. WS2 Final Report: This element refers to variations that facilitate inclusion of the range of age groups across ICANN, from older generations through to the next generations. Moreover, youth engagement should be taken into consideration whenever possible in the activities of the ICANN community, fostering the exchange of experience between generations.
- b. GAC perspective: The GAC agrees this element of diversity should be measured and collected through a voluntary process².

5. Physical Disability:

- a. WS2 Final Report: This element refers to the consideration of individuals across a range of different physical disabilities to participate in ICANN activities at various levels.
- b. GAC perspective: The GAC believes that disability should not be restricted to a particular disability, i.e physical disability as noted in the WS2 Final Report. In

² Work Stream 2 Final Report, Annex 1, page 10: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/ccwg-acct-ws2-final-24jun18-en.pdf>

fact, disability needs to be perceived as an interaction between an individual's personal condition and the environmental factors an individual may encounter. Both factors together may lead to a disability and affect an individual's participation in ICANN.

Continuous improvement should be made in order to ensure that accessibility and equality go hand in hand by removing barriers to participation of people with disabilities in ICANN, hence guarantying the sustainability and viability of the ICANN multistakeholder model.

Due to the aging population, the number of people with disabilities is expected to be higher as people are likely to develop impairments as they age. On this basis, ICANN needs to continue assisting people with disabilities to access the information provided, regardless of their physical, cognitive, or sensory abilities.

6. Diverse Skills:

- a. WS2 Final Report: Diversity in skills contributes to the quality of ICANN policy formulation, decision-making and outreach. It is important to highlight and advocate the advantages of individuals bringing different and diverse skill sets into ICANN's many activities. All activities and groups within ICANN will benefit from having a diverse range of skills available. Outcomes formulated from diverse skills and knowledge will have a higher probability of being accepted by a diverse community. Increased diversity would help expand the diversity of skills within ICANN. Thus, achieving diversity in skills should not be seen as a choice between skills and diversity which excludes participation, but rather one which values many skills sets and facilitates inclusion and broad participation.
- b. GAC perspective: The GAC agrees with the description of this element of diversity. From a GAC perspective a wide range of skills should be considered within ICANN in terms of "policy formulation, decision-making and outreach". In this regard, ICANN should consider skills such as expertise, experience, and knowledge of a certain topic. Skills that are measurable and usually obtained through formal education and participation in ICANN should be considered.

7. Stakeholder Group and Constituency:

- a. WS2 Final Report: Diversity of stakeholder group or constituency participation in ICANN is important in meeting the multi-stakeholder goals of ICANN. This may or may not require a designated representative of a stakeholder group to participate in the various activities. However, attention needs to be paid to the

selection process to ensure participation by both declared stakeholder groups with direct interests as well as minorities and underrepresented groups.

Related to, but broader than, stakeholder group diversity is the requirement that all relevant views, opinions and perspectives are appropriately considered in decision-making. ICANN will not be a truly diverse organization if it merely conforms to diversity relating to the fixed characteristics of participants, while systematically marginalizing minority viewpoints or beliefs from consideration in decision-making.

- b. GAC perspective: The GAC agrees with the WS2 Final Report approach.

GAC additional proposals

8. Diversity of resources for meaningful participation³:

Diversity is not only determined by geographic and linguistic matters for instance, but also by the economic availability of resources that could have a very large impact on access to ICANN services (e.g internet connectivity) or by the diversity of expectations.

Digital divide, for instance, can exist within the same geographic area, language and age groups, but can also be determined by an economic and cultural dimension. The concept of “Meaningful connectivity” as defined by UNSG Roadmap for Digital Cooperation is helpful in conceptualizing this kind of diversity.

9. Diversity in attendance:

Moving towards a future of hybrid meetings, this new situation will create different levels of participation and engagement whether participants are online/remote versus participants physically present at a meeting. The current COVID-19 situation should not preclude participants from attending ICANN Meetings. The GAC welcomes the efforts undertaken since the pandemic, allowing stakeholders to attend ICANN Meetings virtually and looks forward to ICANN’s hybrid meeting model currently being developed and to be tested at a future ICANN Meeting.

The GAC considers that in order to measure the various elements of diversity, the work done by

³ “Meaningful participation”: <https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/>
For more details: https://1e8q3q16vyc81g8l3h3md6q5f5e-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Meaningful-Connectivity_Public-.pdf

IGF definition: <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/policy-network-on-meaningful-access-pnma>

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UNESCO in its Internet Universality Indicators⁴ that try to measure the situation of the Internet in each country, could be a tool and reference for future assessment, and for diversity to be globally considered and measured.

The same reference for the diversity of language could be represented by the UNESCO's atlas of languages in danger: <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/>.

⁴ <https://en.unesco.org/internet-universality-indicators>