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To: Dr. Steve Crocker - Chair of the ICANN Board

CC: Mr. Fadi Chehadé - ICANN CEO

CC: Mr. Sébastien Bachollet, - Chair of the Board Public Participation Committee (PPC)

Dear Steve,

As you know, a number of people who intended to participate at the ICANN 45 meeting in Toronto experienced visa problems, and some of them missed the meeting altogether. Of course, the granting of visas is the sovereign right of the host country, and there is very little ICANN can do when such problems come to light, which is typically very close to the meeting.

However, with its three annual meetings a core activity, ICANN should be highly concerned about this problem, particularly when its essential structures and their bylaws-mandated compositional balance are affected. This is what happened in Toronto when three of five ALAC-appointed members of the 2013 Nominating Committee were not able to participate at the committee's kick-off meeting. Representatives came from Sudan (representing Africa), Moldova (representing Europe), and Armenia (representing the Asia-Pacific). A fourth NomCom member, a Kenyan representative of the GNSO business community, received his visa at the last moment and barely made it to Toronto. The lack of understanding from the host country, Canada, was truly surprising.

ICANN's globalization and its endeavor to be inclusive and representative of all regions of the world should not be held hostage by the whims of host country visa policies and bureaucratic implementation delays. We would like to highlight the example of Wikimedia, which also conducts global annual meetings – the Wikimania - an event that is hosted each year by a chapter in a different country. Wikimedia has managed to hold its meetings with full participation even in countries with severe visa conditions (e.g., US, Europe and Israel) by making the earliest arrangements possible with the host country representatives and authorities. These arrangements typically take place at least one year in advance.

The ALAC respectfully suggests that, as part of the selection process for future meeting venues, ICANN sets as a condition that the potential host organization presents the firm commitment of relevant immigration authorities to facilitate the granting of visas to all members of the NomCom, ICANN Advisory Committee, Supporting Organization members, Staff and other participants designated as essential by ICANN. If other international forum organizers are able to obtain such commitment, so should ICANN.

Finally, you may wish to consider asking the PPC (Public Participation Committee) to invite the ALAC, or a designated representative from the ALAC, to take part in the work which will be carried out on these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

Olivier Crépin-Leblond
Chair, At-Large Advisory Committee