Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

At-Large Advisory Committee – Budget Subcommittee

AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT FOR THE ICANN BOARD

RELATED TO THE

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE OPERATING PLAN FOR THE 2008/2009 FINANCIAL YEAR

Introductory Note by the Staff

This document is a statement from the At-Large Advisory Committee that will be delivered to the Board of Directors of ICANN. The current initial draft was produced by the ICANN At-Large staff at the direction of the At-Large Advisory Committee as resolved in its March 11th 2008 telephonic meeting. The Budget Subommittee of the ALAC has been directed to review this document and propose changes, or a new text, as they see fit, before providing it to the ALAC as a whole and to the community for review and comment.

The community will be given a revised text on 6th April 2008 for their comments, which will be taken up until 16th April 2008 and then incorporated into a new revision, for transmission to the Board of Directors.

Note on Translations

The original version of this document is the English text, which will upon publication be available at http://alac.icann.org/correspondence/. The process of gaining agreement on the contents of the original text was conducted in English. Where a difference of interpretation exists or is perceived to exist between a non-English edition of this document and the original text, the original shall prevail.

[End of Introduction]

At-Large Advisory Committee Statement to the ICANN Board on the Draft Operating Plan for FY 2008/2009

We present our compliments to the Board of Directors of ICANN and welcome the opportunity to make our comments on the Draft Operating Plan and Budget Framerwork for FY 2008/2009.

Firstly, ~~we~~ please note our endorse~~ment of~~ the change to the budgeting and operational planning process introduced this year. It seems to us that the combination of the consultation on these obviously closely-related issues is eminently sensible. We also welcome the longer public consultation timelines that this allows.

~~Since this~~As this is the first stage of this process, ~~our~~ these comments~~, at this stage~~ are introductory. We provide th is document~~em, at this early stage~~ so that ~~they~~ these preliminary reactions and comments may be taken into account as the Staff prepare the Budget and Operating Plan for its first iteration consultation.

Our comments, therefore, are primarily related to the various "Activities/Outcomes by Initiative". We do not propose to comment on each of these, but on those most important to the At-Large Community.

IDN Activities

This is a very important area of work for At-Large – and also for all of ICANN. The extra funding and greatly increased ICANN activity in this area is therefore welcomed. We would like to emphasise the element of communications related to IDNs.

Fundamental choices that will affect the many communities that do not rely upon the Ll atin character set will be made in the next few years. For that reason, we believe ICANN, in partnership with other stakeholders of course, needs to make a substantial, sustained, greatly increased effort to communicate with these communities –to ensure that the message about the forthcoming choices to be made related to IDNs ~~in the forthcoming period~~ reaches a far larger pool of potential contributors to the process than is currently aware and participating. This should not simply take the form of translated press releases but really a well-thought-out media campaign which 'reaches out' to the public. We know that efforts to do this work exist – we wish to emphasise that this is extremely important. We note that we have asked the At-Large staff to propose funding in the forthcoming FY to revise and expand the available materials related to outreach to the individual Internet user community and this is just one aspect that such an effort must address.

~~Implement Policy for New gTLDs~~

~~Whilst we note the greatly increased spending to be associated with this area of work, we wish to note that it is vastly more important to 'get it done right' than to 'get it done fast'. Since we understand that the board has yet to be persuaded that several key elements of the proposed policy are even implementable, we think it is premature to make statements in operational plans or budgets about when new gTLD applications will be taken, for example.~~

Compliance Activities

We note the increase in staffing and staff work related to compliance. We are pleased to see that the budget frame~~r~~work proposes further considerable investment in this area. However we wish to note what we see as two crucial missing major activities in this area ~~in the list of activities~~ related to compliance ~~in the framework.~~:

- **WHOIS Accuracy and Reporting.** We all know that WHOIS is very inaccurate. This is a very serious problem and considerable effort needs to be made to improve this situation. Multiplying the number of gTLDs as is proposed when the existing database is inaccurate is just asking to make a big problem worse – and the existing reporting system is already not fit for purpose. ICANN is not ~~really~~ living up to its obligations with respect to WHOIS – fixing this should be a headline compliance activity in the Operational Plan for 2008/2009. Whilst we are limiting our comments here to compliance activities related to the operational planning cycle, this should not be understood to mean that our concerns related to WHOIS are limited to data accuracy. Our previous statements on the policy aspects of WHOIS remain valid.

- **Complaints Processing.** We note that there is now some information on how registrants can complain on the ICANN website, which is a welcome improvement. We also note that there is a provision as a headline activity in the Operational Plan Framework to "Implement Complaints Process System to address complaints and forward them to correct parties as approved". This is a start but is not nearly enough – such a system needs to also verify whether or not the forwarded complaints were addressed, and provide options so that the complainant can easily report whether or not they are satisfied with the result. The underlying philosophy should be that, as the contractor, ICANN should ensure that the contractees are living up to their side of the 'deal' and completely offloading complaints to the contractee – or anyone else – is ~~the wrong approach~~in our opinion not satisfactory.

Global Outreach

This is a particularly important area to us. The various communities in ICANN are not ~~nearly~~ representative ~~enough~~ of the worldwide Internet-using community. ~~We note~~Whilst we appreciate the initial provision of a substantial increase in funds allocated to Global Outreach – we will look forward to seeing more detail about precisely what this consists of when the draft budget is posted. However, we note that on page 23 of the Draft Framework, under Global Outreach, there is a major area of work listed as 'Implement business engagement outreach'. If this is intended to be outreach only to business communities, this is, in our opinion, clearly far too narrow – outreach efforts and recruitment efforts ~~need to~~must be ~~be~~ even-handed, global – and to all communities and potential participant communities, not just 'business'. We draw the attention of the board to the many comments about the importance of dramatically increasing the outreach and recruitment of ALL stakeholders that was ~~such~~ a common theme of the respondents to the JPA review recently ~~held~~; ~~clearly, From~~ From this we propose that there is broad support for greatly increased work by ICANN in these respects.

~~Of course we~~We welcome the continued support for participation by our community from ICANN. Without it the Internet end-user's voice will simply not be adequately represented. Facilitation of community participation (and specifically th~~s~~at of volunteers) in ICANN is an extremely important issue and one important aspect of this is covered in greater depth in ~~We draw your attention to~~ our statement to you in relation to the development of a volunteer travel and expense support policy, in document AL.ALAC/BUD.SC/0308/2 which is accessible at <insert url here> ~~for elaboration on our views on this subject~~.

Policy Development Support

We welcome the major theme associated with this area of work on page 25, that ICANN will "provide additional secretariat support to SOs, constituencies and ACs to make volunteer efforts more effective." ~~We are~~ ~~As~~We are direct beneficiaries of this, ~~in~~ with the addition of two members of staff on the At-Large team. It shou~~;~~ld be noted that ~~T~~the ~~all be it~~ recent filling of these long-open positions is already beginning to increase our capacity for working ~~effectively~~with greater effici~~ea~~ncy (particularly in the RALO's)~~.~~ ~~W~~, and we hope that the ~~kind of~~ support our community receives of this kind will become generally available across the constituencies and communities and look forward to seeing the detailed plans for how the objective listed in this area is to be achieved.

Registrant Protections

W~~hilst w~~e welcome the increased activity in this area – however, ~~, we wish~~ the board ~~to be seized~~however needs to be aware that from our perspecitve, ~~of the fact that~~ the RAA review process appears to have ceased operation. We hear anecdotally that there is current work in this area inside ICANN, but it is not visible to us (or anyone else from what we can tell). This is a very important area of work for ICANN and to our community. It should not suffer, for example, due to work on new gTLDs taking priority ~~– in our view,~~ the priority ~~is~~ must be given to the protect~~ioning~~ ~~the~~ of existing registrants and only then worrying about adding many more through new gTLDs. We believe there should be ~~and request~~ ~~that~~meaningful ~~there should be~~ deadlines ~~be~~ set for the concluding of work on the RAA – in a completely open and transparent manner.

Transcription and Translation

Our community has been calling for ICANN to become a truly multilingual organisation for years now. We ~~are glad to see~~appreciate and appplaud the increased budget commitment, draft translation framework, and other moves in this direction but we wish to remind you that ICANN has a very, very long way to go to reach the mission that the translation programme proposes.

In our opinion, this area of work is of absolutely central importance to the organisation's credibility, as we do not believe that any consultation or policy development process conducted entirely in English is globally legitimate. This is especially true with subjects like IDNs that – incredibly –continue to be largely ~~english~~English-only, with ~~multiligual~~multilingual documents provided only in some cases, often far later than the original English versions, and only as an afterthought.

Ensuring that the work of ICANN becomes truly multilingual is a core, critical objective. It must not be sidelined, or de-emphasised by other objectives like new gTLDs.

Broaden Participation

This area is of great importance – not just to our community but to all communities. In particular, whilst the provisions for teleconferences for our community have improved by changing vendors, we do not believe that it makes sense to continue to outsource this core

communications function and so we welcome the news that ICANN proposes to purchase a truly fit-for-purpose system to facilitate telephonic interactions. We hope that in doing so choices will be made which truly facilitate equal access and quality for all participants, regardless of where they might be.

In particular, the new system must provide for the technical operation of simultaneous interpretation on teleconferences. This is an absolutely essential function, not something that is "nice to have". Our experience ~~in~~with this has clearly shown ~~,~~that the ability to work, interact and correspond ~~(both~~(both face to face and remotely) in the language that is most comfortable and easy to work with greatly increases and enhances effective participation.

We would also like to emphasise how important it is to broadening participation of effective remote participation in meetings, of which telephonic two-way participation is only one element. We believe that the current remote participation modalities for ICANN meetings are not fit for purpose. ~~We draw your attention to o~~Our statement ~~to you~~ in relation to the development of a volunteer travel and expense support policy, in document AL.ALAC/BUD.SC/0308/2 accessible at <insert url here> ~~for~~also has the elaboration on our views on the subject of remote participation, and meetings.

In addition to these points, we wish to emphasise that one of the most important elements of participation is ICANN producing documents in standardised formats which are accessible, written in plain language, with excellent summaries, indices, glossaries, and the like. This is a real shortcoming of present document production at ICANN and it is a real barrier to participation.

We also believe that fostering participation actually requires a regionally sensitive approach and often regionally differentiated materials. In developing countries, radio and audiovisual materials, to mention just two formats, are the best way to reach non-traditional ICANN stakeholders. It is understood that this kind of outreach would not be in the nature of general Internet education but should be related to the mission of ICANN and its mandate.

In closing, we thank the board in advance for its consideration of our views~~. We~~, and look forward to a response to our concerns and recommendations in due course.