



AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ALAC)

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR

ALAC EXCOM
CHAIR OF THE ALAC

CHAIRMAN OF THE ICANN BOARD
MR. PETER DENGATE-THRUSH

DEAR PETER,

I WRITE TO YOU TODAY AT THE REQUEST OF THE AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO CONVEY THE DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THEY AND THE WIDER AT-LARGE COMMUNITY HAVE WITH THE WAY IN WHICH THE PUBLIC FORUM IN CAIRO WAS ORGANISED IN PARTICULAR, AND TO EXPRESS OUR CONCERN WITH OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE CAIRO MEETING IN GENERAL.

PERHAPS IT IS MOST DESCRIPTIVE TO GIVE THE BOARD SOME SENSE OF THE MOOD AND REACTION TO THIS PART OF THE CAIRO MEETING, IF I QUOTE ONE COMMENTATOR - "FOR A PUBLIC FORUM TO BE ORGANISED IN A WAY THAT LURCHES FROM UNACCEPTABLE CHANGE TO UNACCEPTABLE CHANGE DURING THE MEETING ITSELF IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS GRANDEES SUFFICIENT TIME TO MAKE SPEECHES, YET DISENFRANCHISES THE COMMUNITY BY PROVIDING ALMOST NO TIME WHATEVER FOR ITS CONCERNS TO BE AIRED SPEAKS TO A FUNDAMENTAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF ICANN'S MEETINGS ON THE PART OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE."

IN MORE GENERAL TERMS WHAT I HAVE HEARD IS THAT, 'THE PUBLIC FORUM IS NOT A TIME FOR CANNED SPEECHES - IT IS A TIME FOR THE ICANN COMMUNITY OF VOLUNTEERS TO AIR THEIR CONCERNS TO THE BOARD, THE STAFF, AND ONE ANOTHER, WITH SUFFICIENT TIME FOR THOSE CONCERNS TO BE HEARD AND TO BE ADDRESSED AND DISCUSSED.' (PARAPHRASED FROM SEVERAL PEOPLES STATEMENTS AT OR AFTER CAIRO MEETING). THE AT-LARGE COMMUNITY IS MOST CONCERNED THAT THOSE ORGANISING THE MEETINGS FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THIS FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE AND WE TRUST THAT THIS CONCERNS YOU AND THE REST OF THE BOARD AS MUCH AS IT DOES US. THE AT-LARGE COMMUNITY JOINS THOSE OTHERS WHO HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU IN EXPECTING THE BOARD TAKING DECISIVE ACTION TO ENSURE THAT THE DEBACLE WE EXPERIENCED IN CAIRO NEVER REOCCURS.

THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE PUBLIC FORUM IN PARIS WAS MISMANAGED. THE IDEA THAT A SNAP 'SURVEY', CONDUCTED AT THE LAST MINUTE, SHOULD GOVERN THE ORGANISATION OF THAT PUBLIC FORUM IS LUDICROUS AND THE FACT THAT ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE RESPONDED (GIVEN THE SHORT TIMEFRAME LITTLE ELSE CAN BE EXPECTED) SHOULD HAVE ENSURED THAT THE IDEA OF ALLOWING SUCH A SMALL SAMPLE OF THE COMMUNITY TO DICTATE THE ORGANISATION OF SOMETHING AS IMPORTANT AS THE PUBLIC FORUM WOULD BE ABANDONED. UNFORTUNATELY IT SEEMS THAT BASIC COMMON SENSE ELUDED THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE ON THAT OCCASION JUST AS IT DID AGAIN IN CAIRO.

ICANN'S CONSTITUENTS ARE VOLUNTEERS - A POINT THAT SEEMS LOST UPON THOSE WHO ARE IN CHARGE OF ORGANISING ITS MEETINGS. WE DON'T FLY ACROSS THE WORLD - AT OUR OWN EXPENSE, FOR MANY OF THOSE NOT FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO RECEIVE TRAVEL SUPPORT - TO LISTEN TO CANNED SPEECHES, OR TO WATCH OUR FEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR

GENUINE PUBLIC INTERACTION WITH THE BOARD AND OTHER COMMUNITIES VANISH ALMOST IN FRONT OF OUR EYES BASED UPON THE POOR JUDGMENT OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE.

FURTHER, THE PROVISIONS FOR REMOTE PARTICIPATION IN ICANN MEETINGS ARE A DISGRACE AND HAVE BEEN A DISGRACE FOR YEARS, AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE SEEM TO BE ALLOWED TO ENDLESSLY CONTINUE TO GET AWAY WITH NOT FIXING THE PROBLEM. WHY DO THE REPEATED CALLS FOR REMOTE PARTICIPATION THAT WORKS GET IGNORED, AND WHY DOES THE BOARD CONTINUE TO ALLOW THIS OBVIOUS FAILURE TO REMAIN UNADDRESSED?

TO BE CLEAR, ISSUES SUCH AS THE FOLLOWING ARE UNACCEPTABLE:

- MAIN MEETING AGENDAS WITH MISTAKES (INCLUDING MEETING RECORDS ON THE PUBLIC SCHEDULE SHOWING THE SAME MEETINGS TAKING PLACE AT THE SAME TIME, GOING UNCORRECTED FOR DAYS;
- VERY POOR QUALITY CHAT INTERFACES ATTACHED TO MEETINGS WHICH ARE UNMONITORED BY STAFF SO THAT THESE CHAT SESSIONS ARE NOT ACKNOWLEDGED OR THEIR INPUT AIRED TO THE MAIN MEETING;
- LACK OF TELEPHONIC PARTICIPATION OPTIONS FOR MEETINGS THAT WORK RELIABLY. AFTER SIX MEETINGS OF TECHNICALLY HOPELESS TELEPHONIC PARTICIPATION FACILITIES FOR AT-LARGE'S MEETINGS, IN CAIRO WE DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER TO TRY.
- RECEIVING VERY LARGE DOCUMENTS IN ENGLISH-ONLY ON THE EVE OF A MEETING'S START, AND THEN EXPECTING ATTENDEES TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE IN SESSIONS RELATED TO THESE TEXTS. THE NEW GTLDS DOCUMENTS ARE JUST THE LATEST EXAMPLE OF THIS PROBLEM. THIS IS A TOTALLY UNREASONABLE BURDEN ON VOLUNTEERS AND REINFORCES AN IMBALANCE BETWEEN THOSE WHO MAKE MONEY FROM REGISTRATION – WHO WILL READ THINGS NO MATTER WHEN THEY ARE RELEASED BECAUSE THEIR BUSINESS DEPENDS ON THEM – AND EVERYONE ELSE. IF SUBSTANTIVE DOCUMENTS CANNOT BE MADE AVAILABLE AT LEAST TWO WEEKS BEFORE A MEETING – IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGE VERSIONS – DON'T BOTHER ARRANGING SESSIONS TO TALK ABOUT THEM AT THE MEETING AND DON'T START CONSULTATIONS ON THEM UNTIL WELL AFTER THE MEETING IS OVER.

ICANN SPENDS A LOT OF REGISTRANT-DERIVED FUNDS ON ITS MEETINGS AND ON PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS. THEY SHOULD BE RUN TO A FAR MORE PROFESSIONAL STANDARD THAN THEY CURRENTLY ARE. IT ALSO SHOULD BE APPROACHING THE ENTIRE IDEA OF PARTICIPATION IN A FAR MORE SIGNIFICANT AND SERIOUS WAY THAN HAS BEEN DONE IN THE PAST. WE HOPE THAT THE BOARD-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS ON PARTICIPATION PROVIDE A VENUE FOR THAT DISCUSSION, BUT WE WISH TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT A LOT OF TALK IS NOT WHAT'S REQUIRED. THE COMMUNITY NEEDS AND DESERVES FOR ITS PARTICIPATION TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE IN ICANN TO BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE (CURRENTLY COMPLETELY INADEQUATE AND OFTEN UNPROFESSIONAL) JOB THEY DO WITH RESPECT TO MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION ENHANCEMENT SYSTEMS. WE EXPECT THAT THE BOARD WILL TAKE ACTION TO REMIND THOSE RESPONSIBLE OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS AND CALL THEM TO ACCOUNT FOR THEIR PERFORMANCE.

WE WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THE CREATION OF AN ORGANIZATION MEETING COMMITTEE WITH ONE PARTICIPANT FROM EACH SO/AC HELPING ON BUILDING A BETTER (MORE USEFUL) MEETING.

THERE IS ALSO A POINT OF PERSONAL CONCERN I WISH TO RAISE AS CHAIR OF THE ALAC, THE MATTER OF THE REASONS FOR THE 'COMPRESSED TIME' REMAINING FOR THE PUBLIC FORUM IN CAIRO... IT HAS BEEN REPORTED BACK TO ME FROM 'THE RUMOUR MILL' TO BE IN SOME WAY RELATED THE NEW ACTIVITY OF THE JOINT AC AND SO PARTS

OF THE PLANNED AND ADVERTISED CAIRO AGENDA... TO DESIGNATE THIS AS RIDICULOUS AND ERRONEOUS IS THE VERY LEAST I CAN SAY, AND INDEED TO SAY IT IS DESTRUCTIVE AND MALICIOUS IS MORE ACCURATE. I URGE THE BOARD TO ENSURE THIS RUMOUR IS COUNTERMANDED STRONGLY AND EFFECTIVELY AS SOON AS IS POSSIBLE.

FINALLY AND MOST IMPORTANTLY ON A POSITIVE NOTE, THE ALAC NOTES AND WISHES TO RECOGNISE THE EFFORTS BEING MADE BY THE BOARD TO REMEDY AND IMPROVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WITH ITS NEWLY ESTABLISHED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD (PPBC). PERHAPS THIS IS AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CHAIR AND OTHERS FROM THIS COMMITTEE TO JOIN US IN A SINGLE TOPIC DISCUSSION THAT WE COULD ARRANGE FOR ONE OF OUR REGULAR (AT LEAST) MONTHLY BRIEFING FOR AT-LARGE CALLS. THIS WOULD ALSO ALLOW KIEREN TO BE INVOLVED, AS IS QUITE PROPER AND INDEED IS SOMETHING HE OFFERED BOTH IN CAIRO (IN CONVERSATION WITH ME) AND SINCE VIA EMAIL "I WILL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO GO THROUGH EVERYTHING FROM MY SIDE AND TO TALK THEM THROUGH WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY, WHAT CHANGES ARE AFOOT AND SO ON." (DEC 9TH 2008).

TO THIS END THE ALAC EXCOM WOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO PLAN SUCH A CALL (AS IT WILL BE MOST TIMELY BEFORE OUR AT-LARGE SUMMIT IN MEXICO) IN THE WEEK STARTING JANUARY 12TH 2009 AND WILL ASK OUR STAFF TO SEE WHAT CAN BE ARRANGED, SET UP A DOODLE FOR BEST TIMES AND DATES, AND OF COURSE LIAISE WITH KIEREN ON THIS MATTER. IF THE NEW BCOPC DESIRES TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS ACTIVITY (OR SOME FUTURE ALTERNATE) THEN THIS WOULD BE MOST WELCOME, AND THE PPBC CHAIR NEED ONLY LET US KNOW THEIR AVAILABILITY OR PLANS.

(SIGNED)

CHERYL LANGDON-ORR
ALAC CHAIR 2007-2009
(AND DATED)