IDN Liaison's Update following the ICANN Meeting and the At-Large Summit at Mexico.

At the ICANN Mexico Meeting, the GAC and ccNSO discussed the IDN FastTrack process and moved formal resolutions on the FastTrack process. IDNs were discussed at the joint SO/AC meetings, at the gTLD sessions as also was part of a Working Group discussion at the at-Large summit.

DEMI GETSCHKO of the ICANN Board moved the IDN FastTrack resolution at the Board meeting on 6th March, which in its preamble summarizes the positions of various constituencies:

Whereas, the second revision of the draft implementation plan for the IDN ccTLD fast track process was posted for public comments prior to the ICANN meeting in Mexico City, in order to generate additional community discussion on that topic during and after the meeting.

Whereas, the board has received advice from the GAC and the ccNSO on the draft implementation plan.

Whereas, the board notes that the GAC and the ccNSO are in agreement that more information is needed to support the cost recovery rationale identified in the draft implementation plan, documentations of responsibilities should be encouraged but voluntary, financial contributions should be made on a voluntary basis and not be imposed as a condition for delegation, and future IDN ccTLDs should adhere to all relevant standards, including the IDNA protocol.

Whereas, significant additions have been made on the implementation details of the plan, including a first draft of the documentation of responsibility, a standard arrangement between IDN ccTLD operators and ICANN, and the usage of the IDN tables and variant strings.

Whereas, other stakeholders and the board believe that additional discussion, investigation, and analysis is necessary to determine whether there should be a requirement for (1) documentation of responsibility (2) financial contributions and (3) adherence to the IDN guidelines and IDN technical standards such as IDNA protocol.

It is resolved, that the board thanks the ICANN community for its work to date and encourages it to continue its work so that

It is resolved that the board directs staff to work towards completion of the implementation plan for the IDN ccTLD fast track process by, among other tasks, continuing consultation on the documentation of responsibility, including a specification for adherence to the IDN guidelines and IDN technical standards such as the IDNA protocol.

It is resolved, that the board directs staff to rapidly provide the community with financial information on ICANN costs attributable to ccTLDs, including the costs associated with IDN ccTLDs, that will inform the creation of a financial model for cost contributions to the launch and continued management of the IDN ccTLDs.

In the discussions that followed the resolution moved by Demi Getschko, the Board echoed the positive mood of all ICANN participants by its visible commitment to task of introduction of IDNs. ICANN Chairman Peter Dengate-Thrush seconded the motion and observed that there are some agreements and some disagreements between various constituencies and encouraged that discussions should continue to resolve the differences where they exist. The Chairman expressed his faith that the Board would reach a consensus.

One of the finer technical points raised was about relaxing the requirement of a minimum of three

characters in the IDN string. It was also observed at the Board Meeting that "more and more people talk about IDN ccTLDs [with the] the real desire to have IDNs rolled out ...". It was also observed at the Board Meeting that the ccNSO and the GAC sent a 'very clear and unambiguous message' to the Board and to the rest of the community that a number of important principles should be followed in terms of IDN technical standards.

The cost involved in the roll out of IDNs was also discussed by various constituencies and this was reflected in the Board Meeting as well. CcNSO took the position that "financial contributions should be voluntary and should not be a requirement for delegation of an IDN ccTLD." as contrary to the cost recovery rationale. The GAC considers this as an important issue to be resolved. GAC noted the growing interest and level of preparedness of many countries and territories to introduce IDN ccTLDs under fast track process. The GAC hopes that the development of IDN ccTLD fast track and the new gTLD implementation plans should proceed smoothly, and that the decisions on the rollouts will be taken by the board in the 2009 annual meeting.

The GAC's position is that irrespective of any possible delay in new gTLD implementation plan, the IDN ccTLD fast track should not be affected.

At the GNSO meeting the suggestion and a topic of debate was that not only IDN ccTLDs, but IDN gTLDs need to consider a priority: ""Well, if IDNs go first, all IDNs go first." This thought figured in the Board meeting with the expression that the introduction of new gTLDs and IDN ccTLDs need not be separated and that both are important. This indicated that some Board Members feel that "both should come out [FastTracked] at the same time" and "IDN TLDs should be definitely -- definitely be a priority" The Chairman of the Board indicated "a review of the policy position in relation to timing between ccTLD introduction and gTLD introduction of IDNs" at the Sydney meeting.

The overall impression is that IDNs are indeed on a fast track.

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