YEŞIM SAĞLAM: Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to everyone. Welcome to the APRALO Policy Forum call taking place on Thursday, 25th of January, 2024 at 0600 UTC. On our call today, we have Justine Chew, Gopal Tadepalli, Cheryl Langdon-Orr, Priyatosh Jana, Udeep Baral, Kong Diep, Holly Raiche, Shah Rahman, Satish Babu, K Mohan Raidu, Ashirwad Tripathy, Phyo Thiri and Prateek Pathak.

We have received apologies from Amrita Chaudhry and from Maureen Hilliard. From staff side we have Gisella Gruber and myself, Yeşim Salam, present on today's call and I will also be doing call management for today's call. And before we get started, just a kind reminder to please state your name before speaking for the transcription purposes. And with this, I would like to leave the floor back over to you, Justin. Thank you very much.

JUSTINE CHEW: Thank you very much, Yeşim. Welcome, everyone, to our first APRALO Policy Forum call for 2024. Thank you for taking the time out to come to this call. And by coming to this call, I can assume that all of you are interested in this particular issue that we're going to discuss today, which is at a high level, variant management, variant TLDs, or variants at the top level as well as second level. I'm not going to go too much into what that actually means because I believe Satish is going to try and cover that.

The idea, as I understand what Satish is trying to do, is to provide some high level to middle level information about the work that has been

undertaken and is being undertaken by the expedited policy development processes on internationalized domain names.

That name, in short is EPDP on IDNs. Now, that name is actually a bit misleading because although we are dealing predominantly with IDNs, it's also more about variants for top level and second level strings or TLDs and domain names, because IDNs themselves have been around for a good number of years.

So, without going to much more depth and taking time away from Satish, I'm going to just say that, Satish is one of the three ALAC team members appointed to represent the ALAC and At-Large in that particular IDNs on EPDP. He has been a member since the very beginning of the EPDP, and I think it was August 2021. So, he's been there for quite a few years already, at least two plus years. And I am going to invite Satish to talk to us about his presentation and also to address any questions that we may have along the way.

Now, I'm going to leave it up to Satish to pause if he needs to pause the presentation for any questions, or if he chooses to take questions at the end of the presentation. But feel free to type in your questions in the chat. But I would ask that you somehow indicate that it's a question. So, it's easy for either Satish or myself to pick up that you have a question and we can try to raise it along the way. Okay, over to you, Satish.

SATISH BABU: Thanks, Justin, for the opportunity to talk to the EPF. I'm Satish for the record, and we're going to be talking about the variant management of

IDNs at the top and more substantively on the second level. Next slide, please. So, here is what we're trying to cover until maybe for another 30, 35 minutes. What are these IDN variants? What are the objectives of BPDP and the phases? What are some of the principles developed under Phase 1 and the comparison of Phase 1 and two?

This is the general context. And then we move on to Phase 2 questions and some background of the Phase 2, the progress of the phase-to-phase meeting that we had last month at Kuala Lumpur. And a quick summary of Phase 2 charter questions. We're not going to get into these questions, but at least you get a flavor of what we're talking about. Then we talk about something called IDN implementation guidelines, which is a standalone kind of work. And we will discuss why it is important to talk about this right now and the conclusions and questions and answers. Next, please.

Now, first is what are these variants? So, IDN domain invariants refer to different representation of a domain name in different scripts and languages. And here you see two words in Chinese. So, both are HSBC. And HSBC is a well-known bank. So, for Chinese speakers, these are identical words, but in different scripts. And they can choose to use either of them interchangeably depending on the context. But for the domain name system, these are completely different Unicode points, code points. So, how do we make these different, completely different, according to the DNS infrastructure, these labels function similarly? And for this, we need to have consensus policy.

So, within the IDN UPDP team, we had a discussion on the differences between technical standards, technical policy, and consensus policy.

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IETF, whatever the RFC is, they produce technical standards. Consensus policy is when we have a cross-community group like UPDP and IDN, with representation from different ICANN stakeholding Acs/SOs. And they develop policy by consensus.

The final step is a consensus call. Now, in between these two, between IETF standards and consensus policy, there is a technical policy that we will see an example of later down in the presentation. So, currently what we're talking about is consensus policy. And the UPDP is an example of that. So, because of the absence of such policy, IDN variants have not been available at the top level. But second level, they were available because it's a registry-level thing.

Next. Now, in May 2021, GNSO initiated the UPDP and IDNs in order to develop policy for managing IDN variants at the top and second level. Now, when the – okay, this is based on a charter developed by a team appointed by GNSO. This is based on multiple prior work done by ICANN community, including SubPro, the staff paper on IDN variants, and IDN implementation guidelines 4.0. It is an UPDP. It has got specific meaning under GNSO's structure, the way it functions, etcetera. And it is coordinated with ccNSO's ccPDP 4, which is developing policy for variants at the top level for ccTLDs. And we started the work in May 2021.

Next, please. Actually, we started the work, I think, in August. The GNSO's action was in May. Now, the Phase 1 was – so what happened was we were given a set of questions. There was no Phase 1, Phase 2 at that point. But then when the team looked at these questions, they said, look, we have to separate out those that apply to the top level.

That's a priority because the next round is coming. And we didn't want to hold up the next round because the initial estimation of the work of the UPDP was still 2025 or so, or 2024-end, something like that. So, we said we can't have it so late. So, let us divide it into two parts. First, that applied only to the top level, and call that the Phase 1, and finish it up early. And the remaining questions referred to the second level. That can wait because we have some more time for that. Now, the Phase 1 work identified four principles.

The first is that the roots are in LGR, as the sole source of variants. Before this, there were different ways of producing variants of a given label. But since we wanted to centralize everything and have only one mechanism in place, the technical solution was the roots were in LGR. So, this is a technical tool. It's an online tool. You can give it a label, and it will list out all the variants and their status also. So, this is very useful because for anybody who wants to apply and see what are the variants, you have one single source of truth. So, that's a very important decision that the Phase 1 took. The second is the integrity of the variant set. Now, this tool displays a set of variants.

So, the integrity of the set basically refers to the point that we cannot open up the set. The whole set has to move lockstep in every stage. So, if you transfer one of those variants to another registry operator, the entire set will have to move. And you can't break apart the set. The third is the same integrity principle. If you look at HSBC, and if those two labels, the traditional and simplified labels, went to two parties, then there will be a very, very bad case of user confusion because you don't know which is the authentic one. So, the principle here is that if

one of the variants is given to one applicant, then the entire set has to be given to the same applicant.

And finally, the principle of conservatism. Some of our constituent groups within ICANN felt that we should not be too liberal in giving out variants because that may cause difficulties at the root zone. You'll see that later. So, we were asked to be conservative, to create policy in such a way that we don't too liberally give out variants. From an end-user perspective, EPDP's work could enhance user experience. Since 2012, in the last round, some of the language communities have been waiting for variants because that is the way the real language communities work, like the case of HSBC.

So, definitely the presence of variants will enhance the user experience, wherever it applies. It doesn't apply to all scripts. But concerns were expressed about the potential impact of too many variants on the security and stability of the root zone. This is why we have the principle of conservatism. So, EPDP's work since ICANN78. Phase 1 final report published in 2023, November. After the public comments were received from the ICANN community, all the six recommendations for the Phase 1 final report was approved by the Council in November. And for the charter questions from Phase 2, a Phase 2 meeting was scheduled.

Next. Yeşim, can you reduce this slightly? I mean, the screen size, because some of it is, I mean, I can't see the slide numbers also. Is it possible to make it smaller?

YEŞIM SAĞLAM:	Okay. Sorry for that, because I'm seeing it with perfect fit on my end. How is it now?
SATISH BABU:	Okay. This is fine.
YEŞIM SAĞLAM:	Okay.

SATISH BABU: So, here's a comparison of Phase 1 and Phase 2. The focus of Phase 1 was top level and focus of Phase 2 is second level. But to be accurate, the focus of Phase 1 was top level, IDN, variant, labeled. Of Phase 2, it was second level, IDN, variant, domain names. So, in Phase 1, we talk about labels, because we are talking about a single label at the top. In Phase 2, we are talking about domain names, because there is a top level and a second level combined.

Then that becomes a domain name. The current situation is that Phase 1, there's no policy, and the PDP Phase 1 is exactly doing that. But for Phase 2, registry-level policy does exist for second-level variants. Ment for, who is this work ment for? Mostly ICANN because it's dependency for the next round. I'm talking about Phase 1. And Phase 2 is mostly for registries. Main stakeholders, ICANN applicants, registries. For Phase 2, registries, registrars, base lists, registrants, and end-users. Excuse me.

Now, how are variants identified? In Phase 1, it is through the centralized mechanism of the rule zone LGR. In Phase 2, some of the

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identification is done by IDN tables. It's a decentralized mechanism at the registry level. But ICANN does some coordination to ensure that it is consistent and all that. But it is operated at the registry level. And end-user importance, I would say Phase 1 is generally lower. And Phase 2 is higher, because the end-users, as well as registrants, have to work with these multiple labels. So, there's an impact on the end-users. Next. So, compared to Phase 1, where the policy is at the level of ICANN itself, as gTLDs are the subject of that policy. At the second level, it is somewhat different.

So, here we have two different cases. One is an example of some policies which apply to multiple registries. Therefore, ICANN is at the level of ICANN. The other charter questions refer to intra-registry policies. So, different registries can have potentially different ways to implement those charter questions. So, all cross-registry policies are part of the top-level ICANN policy. So, the EPDP will have recommendations for them. But for intra-registry policies, there are gaps. I mean, the EPDP has not considered making policy for them, because it's left to the registries to handle. There is also this third aspect. Security and stability are handled through IDN Implementation Guidelines version 4.1.

And this is a very peculiar thing. We will come to this later. But this is a technical policy created by an expert group. It is binding on the contracted party. That's a very unusual situation, because normally, anything that applies or is binding on the contracted parties is developed through consensus. But here, we have a case where an expert group was set up, and they developed this IDN Implementation Guidelines and it is binding. So, there are some consequences as we will

see later. As a consequence of these factors, several of the charter questions have been left without recommendations by the EPDP team, leaving them to the registries to evolve their own policy.

Next. So, here are some of the principles that were applied for Phase 2 charter questions. So, the principles evolved in the Phase 1, like same entity and root zone, the source of variance. They apply slightly differently at the second level. Most of them still apply, but not exactly the same way. So, like we mentioned earlier, the second level root zone LGR is not used, instead, a registry-level mechanism called IDN table is used.

In order to achieve consistency, a further step called harmonization would be required. Now, the point is that a registry may have multiple, a registry operator may have multiple top-level domain names under it. And it can potentially have multiple IDN tables also. Earlier, that was the current situation. But these have to be now harmonized. And harmonization is a technical step in order to ensure that there is consistency in the way the variants are identified. So, that is an extra step.

So, this harmonization, we had some controversy around it because the registries wanted to leave it to themselves fully, but the EPDP team felt that harmonization principles should be established so that maybe they're doing it, but what happens if a top-level domain is transferred to another registry? And they are using it in some other way. Then you have a problem.

So, there has to be some understanding. So, we are actually starting our call today, this evening, local time, after the New Year break. So, the first thing, one of the first things we'll be discussing is, a small group set up to discuss harmonization. So, that will be discussed in today's meeting. Discussions where harmonization should be registry-level or across registries.

Now, when you say across registries, it is that the principles should be across registry, basically. Also, the same entity principle is applicable at the second level but may work differently, as there are no mechanisms currently in place that makes identification of an entity feasible within registries. The point is the same entity principle in this case applies to registrar. If I go into this domain name, currently it's very simple. I go, I put in the name. If it's available, I take it. But now we have an extra step.

When I put in the name and if it's available, then the website, the registry website, the registrar's website, sorry, will show me the variants that are available. And this can only come to me. I need not take everything, meaning, I don't have to take all the five different variants that are there. But whatever I don't take is not given to anybody else. It is kept on hold. It is withheld for future, possible future activation. So, there is a little more complexity value to start registering this IDN variant.

Now, the problem here is, how do we identify this particular party, this person? In the case of the top level, we have a complicated process application. Then finally, there's a registry agreement. And it's a public information. Here, it is not necessary that this is public information.

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And registries have some difficulties currently. There's something called ROID, registry object ID. But that is, we'll see that in the chart equations. But unfortunately, registries do not use that particular concept in a uniform manner. So, we have not made any recommendation on how to kind of identify an entity.

The definition of a variant set. The variant set in the top level was just the top-level variants. But in the second level, it is a combination of all possible combinations of second level and top level. So, it's a much larger kind of a potential set. Transitional exceptions, otherwise called as grandfathering, would be required for some cases of existing gTLDs. Suppose there are two second level, not variants, second level registrations. When you start harmonization and all that, you find that these are suddenly, so far, they were completely independent registrations. But suddenly, now they have become variants. And they belong to two different parties. Then what do you do? It violates the same entity principles.

So, such exceptions are handled on a case-to-case basis through something called grandfathering. Which means the status quo is maintained until both the things converge. Suppose I don't renew, then that variant can go to the other person. So, that person has all the variants. So, the same entity is very, very important. Otherwise, we'll have a lot of user confusion. So, when you do grandfathering, there is a potential for user confusion. But we'll have to see how registry is handled because it is a registry level issue. Next. Basically, these are the legal and contractual impact when you have variants at the second level. So, rights protection.

The last point is about pricing. Now, the pricing of the variant set, or even bundling of the variant set, is outside the limit of the EPDP. And it is supposed to be a registry policy. So, registries can decide how to price this. The EPDP has not made any recommendations for this. It's not even in the charted list.

Next. So, at the Kuala Lumper meeting, all the discussions were completed for all the charted questions, except one, where it was about harmonization. And a small group was set up between ICANN staff and the registries. They were supposed to have sorted it out. And in today's call, we will know what has happened. Some more minor language changes, although there is a consensus on all the points.

The ALAC team inputs were well-received throughout the Phase 1 and Phase 2 as well. The Phase 2 report will come out in February, and the public comments will open then. And the public comments will extend until after ICANN79. And during this public comment period, the EPDP team will be presenting the important charted questions at CPWG meetings for input. So, this particular webinar that we are having today is not necessarily for input. It is for creating a context so that all of you can start understanding when the actual draft report comes out. You can look at it with more context so that you can respond or make comments as you wish.

Next. So, here is a summary of charted questions. For example, mutual request C4. You will note that these are not in any order. Like, you start with C4, and then down the line you have C3 (a), then B4. The reason is the original charter had a bunch of questions which are not necessarily logically sorted. So, when we created Phase 1 and Phase 2, we resorted

them on what we thought was relevant. So, the numbers are slightly kind of mixed up. So, mutual quotient of IDN tables. That means the harmonization, basically, that the variance set should be enumerated in the same way and are consistent. Then the method used for harmonization, format for IDN tables. So, there's a staff paper which recommended XML format.

There's an RFC for it. But Registry said no. It would be a very expensive exercise for them to convert all the existing IDN tables which are ASCII files into XML. So, you will see that there is no recommendation for C5 and C6, because the EPP is basically saying that, look, this is Registry's flexibility and their call. They can make policy as they wish. C1, the end-user impact is high because the same entity. If you break the same entity, then you have problems at the end-user the user experience level. Then grandfathering existing domain names. Identifying the registrant for the same entity. So, who is the same entity? So, this is not very relevant for us. It is low. But Registry has not, I mean, EPDP has not decided any policy for this.

This ROID is one possibility. But unfortunately, Registry is saying that they don't all use ROID the same way. So, we cannot use it as an identification. Same entity across life cycle. You'll note that some of these, like, for example, C1 and D4 have multiple recommendations for the same charter question. So, some of them are basically exceptions. Like C1, the case of C1, same entity is the main recommendation. But then it might break existing registrations.

So, you have to have grandfathering. So, that's an exceptional situation. Next. Yeah, transfer policy suspension. Already delegated gTLDs. D5 is

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somewhat high because it -- So, this is basically left to the Registry, but it is not an impact on registrants because the fee might be different based on this policy. Basically, we sometimes see registrants and end users together At-Large. So, this is of importance. Registry agreement changes. G1 and G1(a) are basically about IDN implementation guidance, which you'll see shortly in the next slide. Then we have right protection mechanisms, Trademark Clearing House, and so on. This is the uniform domain name dispute resolution policy and the uniform rapid suspension system, which is some of the protection mechanisms.

Next. So, now we come to IDN implementation guidelines. So, what are these things? These guidelines are general IDN registration policies and practices that minimize the risk of cyber-spotting and consumer confusion and respect the interests of local languages and character sets.

So, basically, IDN implementation guidelines is a set of recommendations by this working group, which is basically to ensure that security stability kind of issues are avoided. So, earlier on, I said there is technical standard, what IT produces. There is consensus policy that GNSO and other community working groups also produce. In the middle, you have technical policy. And this is an example of such technical policy. Now, this working group was set up through a call for community experts on IDN basically and DNS.

So, from ALAC, there are two of us who basically applied for it. And then both of us have made a part. Although, at that original time, there was only one person per AC/SO, but they said, okay, both can come in. But after a while, the other person stopped attending meetings. And I

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also did not attend all the meetings. But towards the end, I attended most of the meetings. And this is, again, a very long kind of thing, 2015 to 2018. So, basically, it is an expert working group, which produces technical policy. But the problem here is that some of the, okay, the last point is about the topic of work of the expert working group were considered somewhere between technical standards of ITF and consensus policy of GNSO. But there was a problem with this particular group.

Next slide. So, the technical policy is by a technical group. That's all right. But the technical group ended up making consensus policy decisions. Why did this happen? Perhaps the charter was not as explicit or perhaps there was a little bit of machine creep. Whatever the reason, at the end of this three and a half years of work, the 4.0 version of the guidelines were produced. But when GNSO, I mean, it was given to GNSO first. And when they saw that this contained consensus policy decisions, where they had no say, basically, to the technical group that decided on all the recommendations without any representation from different parties.

So, GNSO said, look, we cannot implement all this because it's binding on us. It is legally binding on us. And we were not a part of it. So, GNSO, what they did was they recommended to the board to, what shall I say, to not to activate some of these recommendations. So, what the board did then was, the board accepted GNSO's recommendation. And they basically said, these ones will not be acted upon. If you look at the actual document, you'll see that they are greyed out. And this was published as IDN implementation guidance version 4.1 and these consensus policy questions which crept into this particular report, GNSO

then decided to hand all of them, plus a few more, and created the EPDP and IDN.

So, there's a very organic link between the IDN implementation guidelines and the EPDP itself. Because many of the charter questions were inspired by, in fact, there's some common people in both the groups. The charter development of EPDP had people who were on the other, the expert working groups. So, current status is that we have 4.1, with all the consensus aspects taken out of it, which the EPDP has been working since it was set up. And the rest of it is published as IDN implementation guidelines, version 4.1.

Next slide. The question to EPDP was the G1 chartered question. What should be the proper vehicle to update that implementation guidelines? So, given the fact that there were some mission creep or scope creep, and how do we ensure that this doesn't happen for the future? So, what should be the proper way to update this?

So, the EPDP considered different options. So, first was another EPDP to do this IDN implementation with IDN EPDP. So that is one option. Second was across community working group and third was an improved version of the same expert working group that was there for 4.0. Now, the problem with this option, so the cross-community working group is not considered appropriate because it is a technical group, it is an expert's group, I mean, it is a technical kind of a consideration. The topic is technical, highly technical. So, we have to understand the IETF's recommendation because this is based on that. So, it requires a technical background and therefore the CPWG was not considered appropriate.

It is not about cross-community, it is more about a group of experts. Now, at the IANA level, there is no difference between GNSO or ccNSO vis-à-vis the security stability issues. So, for this technical working group, we wanted GNSO and ccNSO both to be involved. But that rules out the EPDP model because EPDP is GNSO-centric. So, the EPDP team has recommended that we use a more rigorous version of the expert working group itself. You make it more rigorous, have a strong charter, which is very clear that there should not be any creep. And that is what the recommendation is now. We don't know when it will be, the next review will be done, but it's most likely going to be an expert working group with some of the characteristics of an EPDP, which makes it much more rigorous. Next slide, please.

This is my last slide. So, the Phase 2 of the EPDP and IDN focuses on creating policy regarding IDN variants at the second level. So, if you have, we saw the HSBC two representations of the same word. So, if you have a second level on it, suppose you say London. HSBC traditional, London. HSBC simplified. So, both are variants of each other. And, I have skipped some definitions, for example, what is the canonical form, what is the primary variant, primary label, etcetera, primary domain name in this case.

So, the EPDP basically focused, the Phase 2 focuses on policies regarding this kind of label. What is the kind of downstream implications for registries, across registries, or within registries? So, in contrast to Phase 1, Phase 2 was mostly registry centric. EPDP made recommendations for those charted questions that were cross registry nature, which is broad. And the remaining registry specific charted questions, we have left it to the registries to create their own policy.

The EPDP also examined the continued renewal of IDN implementation guidelines after 4.1. And most of the work of Phase 2 is now complete. There are a few outstanding issues such as IDN table harmonization. And this will be taken up in today's call. And next month, we will have the report ready for public comments. Next slide, please. So, yeah. Justine, are there any questions in chat so far?

JUSTINE CHEW: No. Well, there was one, but I think I've addressed it. It's not so much a question, but it was a suggestion. So, and it was on automaticity, which I replied that we've already included that in one of our principles on the Phase 1. Any questions that people want to ask to clarify? Or anything to do with what Satish has just presented on? Please feel free to raise your hand and take the mic. Sometimes it might be easier to verbalize your question than rather than to type something in the chat. Because then you have ability to actually clarify if someone, if Satish doesn't understand the question. Shah, did you want to ask your question? Okay. While you decide on that, Nabeel, I recognize you, please go ahead.

NABEEL YASIN: Thank you, Justine. Thank you, Satish, for the great presentation. This is Nabeel Yasin, for the record. I mean, regarding the IDN and the conflicts and all this, specifically for the Arabic script or Arabic language. Is there any technical boundary that limits adding the traditional Arabic? I mean, with the accent in the Arabic, we have the simplified without the accent and the traditional way. Is there any, I mean, technical

limitation that it's impossible to write the second level domain in the correct way? So, to avoid any conflicts and so on. Thank you very much.

SATISH BABU: Thanks, Nabeel, for the question. So, some context is required. The way IDNs have been created is actually at the top of a number of other layers. The foundational layer is Unicode. Now Unicode is a consortium, which would definitely have speakers and, I mean, language community members from Arabic. So, firstly, we have to ensure that whatever language features that you want, enter into the Unicode code points. So, now that is for the language communities to decide. Now, once the code points are there in the Unicode, whatever you want, now you have to check that on the Unicode website, what, how, because the Arabic, I understand, I don't, I can't read Arabic.

I understand that there are fairly significant complexities. It's a formed script, meaning same character appearing in different places will look differently. So, there are some additional complications for Arabic, but the first step is that these should feature in the Unicode Arabic page. Once that is there, then the next step is by the ICANN, by IETF. IETF has made some standards, including for IDNs itself. So, that has to accommodate what you're asking for.

The third level, the root zone LGR process that is based on language communities' work. So, there is a generation panel GP for every language. Some of them have multiple languages, but Arabic definitely has a GP. It will have language experts in it. Now they will decide from

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out of all the code points in Unicode in Arabic, which are the ones that can be used for domain names. Now domain names are not like literature. It's a very restricted kind of representation. So, this language community decides out of all the Arabic code points in the Unicode, what should be allowed for Arabic.

So, that is the document called the MSR. MSR right now is in 5.0 version. Now, once you have that, then because the point is that Arabic language is maybe very explicit, but for a domain name, there are some constraints. So, these language communities decide on what are the kind of code points that must be permitted and what are the rules that apply. So, originally this was the basis for an IDN table. So, what are the code points allowed and what are the rules? So-called whole label encoding rules.

So, how to create a label from these things. So, there are rules for that. So, therefore, that step is an additional step. And then all the different generation panels pool their work at a step called integration. And when you have that, then they're ready to kind of create IDN domain names and delegate them to the root zone. So, there are a number of steps, and I'm not very precisely clear as to what you're asking for, but what you should do is probably to check out the Unicode and MSR where they're permitted.

Only a subset of what is available will be permitted for domain names. So, yeah, so Justin points out that the generation panel covers related scripts. For example, there's one called Indy. Yeah, that covers a bunch of scripts, mostly within the Indian subcontinent, because they are all connected in some way. And also, some outside the subcontinent like

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Bengali and also Sinhalese and so on. Then CGT, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, they also use a common generation panel. So, there are a number of steps involved in IDN.

This is what makes the VPP so complicated. The fact that, like me, I can maybe read about five scripts, English plus some of the other Indian scripts, but for the vast majority of the languages, I'm not able to look at the language or read it. So, it is very hard. You have to kind of model this in your head without knowing the actual language. So, the EPDP is highly technical, and this is what makes it technical. And we don't want to kind of risk it. Meaning, and we're not even talking about universal access, which is a different problem, but in some ways connected. So, these complexities are what makes the work of the EPDP quite challenging. So, I hope you're okay with the explanation.

NABEEL YASIN: Thank you very much. Thank you.

JUSTINE CHEW: Yes. If I may add to it, Nabeel, when you talk about Arabic as a language, as Satish mentioned, there's an Arabic generation panel, but the Arabic there, we're talking about the script rather than the language. So, it would cover possibly other language. And I can think of Urdu, which shares Arabic script as a writing system. So, it's not language-specific, but it's script-specific, the written form of language.

If you want to know the technicalities of how the language script, in terms of the rules that feed into how Arabic is-- what rules are

generated to control the Arabic script in terms of IDNs, you'd have to look at the work of the Arabic generation panel and the MSR, as Satish mentioned, and also the label generation rules for the Arabic script. And that's something that's outside of the EPDP remit. It's done by generation panels, which all, there are a number of generation panels, which is why there are now like 26, 27 scripts within the root zone label generation rules.

So, the RZLGR is actually a compilation of all the generation rules for the scripts that have been produced over the course of time. And they all feed into this high-level thing called the root zone label generation tool, which is access-- sorry, the root zone label generation rules, which is accessible by a tool of which the hyperlink I already put into the chat earlier. Okay. So, any other questions? In the meantime, I saw a question from Shah. Shah, did you want to ask your question or -- Let me find it, okay. Or let me try and interpret it.

So, you say that once the board acceptance recommendation that will follow by GNSO for Phase 2. So, I understand what you're asking is that once the board accepts the recommendations that is before the board, which is the Phase 1 recommendations, then what happens? And what's the process in Phase 2? Now, as Satish mentioned earlier, the charter for the EPDP was quite large, and there were questions that were strewn across the charter, so in no particular order, and some of it dealt with top-level matters, issues, and some of it dealt with second-level issues.

So, the EPDP took the step to segregate those two types of charter questions. The ones that are dealing specifically with top level were

handled under Phase 1. And the ones that now deal with second level are handled under Phase 2. And I said earlier in reply to someone in the chat. So, the Phase 1 recommendations have already been completed. They have gone to the GNSO Council because GNSO is the manager of EPDPs. So, these phases 1 recommendations have already gone to GNSO Council. GNSO Council has approved them. And they have recently, on the 18th of January, forwarded those recommendations to the board for consideration.

Now, they only become consensus policy. Any EPDP recommendations only become consensus policy when it's adopted by the board. And then it goes to implementation after they are adopted by the board. So, with Phase 2, the initial report for the Phase 2 recommendations is not out yet, and that's what Satish was alluding to, that there's an upcoming public comment proceeding opening in February sometime, and that is for the Phase 2 recommendations.

So, that goes through a public comment proceeding. And then the comments that are received through that public comment proceeding will go back to the EPDP for review to see if there's any action that needs to be taken to the set of preliminary recommendations. Then the EPDP will produce a final report, which is the Phase 2 final report, and that will go to GNSO Council for consideration and approval. And if Council approves that, then it will go through the same motions as the Phase 1, which is that they will go to the board for adoption and implementation if the board approves them. So, I hope that is the essence of your question, Shah. If not, then please, all right, okay. So, you're saying in chat that, right, I answered the question. Okay. Are there any other questions?

SATISH BABU:	There is a question from Gopal, about the variant set. I think Justin has already kind of clarified it, but just to add, the variant set in the second level is based on applying the identity on a primary string. So, you give a primary string, and it will spit out all the variants. And it will also show you what is allocatable, what is not allocatable, etcetera. So, once you have the variant set, that set has to be operated as one set. You cannot take out any particular string out of that or add another string into that. Once you have the variant set, it is fixed. It's fixed forever, actually. So, if you transfer that particular domain name to another registrar, the entire variant set has to move with it.

So, the variant set basically is to ensure that there is the same entity. If you don't have the same entity, if you break the same entity, there will be huge user confusion because what is equivalent is owned by multiple entities. Then you have a large amount of confusion. So, the same entity is very crucial to ensuring that you avoid those kinds of situations.

Just one other point, which is that the Indian languages and the Sinhalese and Bengali and all that are together covered by something called the Neo-Brahmi. The Brahmi is an ancient script. So, all the scripts derived out of that is being covered by this particular Neo-Brahmi GP. You can see the list of GPs on the website. There are many, actually, and some that handle a large number like the Latin GP. Okay, back to you, Justine.

JUSTINE CHEW: Thanks, Satish. Yeah, so with Phase 1, where it's a top level, where the integrity of the set rule comes in, is that when someone applies for a string, that becomes the primary string or the primary TLD and that determines what variants are tied to that TLD. And the variant set there is through the RZL, the Result Label Generation Rule. So, that's the tool that determines the set tied to a particular primary TLD. With the second level, that principle still applies, but the tool that is used to generate the set for a second level domain name variant set is the IDN tables. And that is produced by registry and they are managed by the registries. Whereas the RZLGR is something created by ICANN. Okay, any other questions?

SATISH BABU: One comment, the registries actually create the IDN tables, but ICANN makes available something called a reference LGR for different scripts that the registries can use in order to create them. And also, once the registry creates a new IDN table after harmonization, it is going to be vetted by ICANN. That's a one-time process. And then the registries continue to kind of operate it. Yeah. Should we go to the polls now?

JUSTINE CHEW: Sure.

SATISH BABU: Yeah, so can we run the -- There are two questions in the polls which are coming up right now. Please see if you can understand it. The first

one is here on the screen. Those BRs that you see, the HTML line breaks. So, ignore it.

JUSTINE CHEW: Yeşim, we're going to rely on you to let us know what is the percentage of responses for the poll question.

YEŞIM SAĞLAM: I was just going to say I'm still waiting because we have not received many responses. Out of 24, only 10 people have voted, which is equivalent to 41%. And, okay, it seems like we are receiving more responses.

JUSTINE CHEW: I think we have around 20 participants today, excluding a couple of staff, I suppose. A little bit more than 20, I'm guessing.

YEŞIM SAĞLAM: Yeah. We have received 13 responses. Which is 54% of the participants. And I don't see any actually further responses coming through. So, if you would like, I can end the poll and share the results. The poll has been open for two minutes.

JUSTINE CHEW: Yeah, that's fine. Because I think there's a number of questions. Two or three questions?

YEŞIM SAĞLAM: Two questions, yeah.

SATISH BABU: Yeah. Go ahead and close.

JUSTINE CHEW: We have seven minutes left. Please go ahead and close this. You can show the results and then just move on to the second question.

YEŞIM SAĞLAM: Here are the results.

SATISH BABU: Right. So, the correct answer is the third one. Meaning, I see that we have a 50-50 break on that. The charted questions of Phase 2 were not too technical because it was created for consensus policy. So, if it was too technical, then it would have gone to some technical group. So, the real reason was that these charted questions which were not answered, no recommendations made by the EPDP is because these are registry-level questions. And the registries were left to, I mean, across ICANN, we didn't need a policy. So, the EPDP did not recommend any policy. And it was left to the registries to create their own. You can go to the next one.

YEŞIM SAĞLAM: Okay. We are receiving the responses faster this time. It's already 54% of the participants who have voted. Okay, I think we are good to end the poll. If you would agree with me as well, Satish and Justine. 66% have answered, by the way.

SATISH BABU: Right. We can close it.

YEŞIM SAĞLAM: Let's end it and share the results.

JUSTINE CHEW: Oh, okay.

SATISH BABU: This is interesting. So, this is 100% right at this time. So, basically, I think one of the takeaways from this call, although it is not central to the EPDP itself, is the difference between the technical standards of IETF, the technical policy of the IDN implementation guidelines, and the consensus policy of the rest of ICANN. So, in this case, what was deferred were consensus policy decisions which crept into the technical working group.

The technical expert working group is not a kind of representative model at all. I mean, it is representative in the sense of each expert comes from the one particular AC/SO. But unfortunately, there is no, I mean, he's acting as an individual expert, not as a representative of, say,

when I'm going there, I'm not going as the messenger from ALAC, but I'm applying my own background and context to kind of make recommendations.

So, the technical working group cannot make consensus policy, because consensus policy, especially if it is binding. And in this case, it is binding in the IDN implementation guidelines. So, you can't have kind of binding rules created without your participation and the consensus process. So, that's the reason. So, this time we have 100%. So, back to you, Justine.

JUSTINE CHEW: OK. Thank you, Satish, for your presentation and for your patience in answering questions coming from the floor as well as in the chat. I guess this is pretty much it, unless some people would like to do any follow-up questioning. Feel free to send questions to the list, and then if there are, we can pick them up and try and answer them offline. But I would like to just mention that in terms of the APF, the APRALO policy forum moving forward, we do have a calendar of events which you can access through the APRALO policy forum wiki.

If you don't know where that is, then just Google APRALO policy forum and you should be able to find a link. OK. Yeah. And that will show you sort of the planned events that we are doing for the next three months, at least, or the next two months at least. And we will continue to populate that particular calendar with activities. And the activities will be likely a combination of calls like this, where we actually close it just for the APF members and we discuss a particular topic.

So, this is like a single topic discussion. It also can be a webinar where it would be likely more to be open to other people outside of the APF and even outside APRALO. It could be town hall, could be ICANN meeting readouts where we share key takeaways from different groups that have been attending the ICANN meetings.

So, feel free to have a look at the calendar. And thank you, Yeşim, for putting the URL to the APRALO policy forum wiki workspace, the wiki workspace. So, that's the central location of everything to do with APF that you can easily access and keep in touch with. I would like to say, and to repeat myself, I was saying something earlier in the call that we're going to be having another APF call next week, but instead of it being on the Thursday as usual, we're going to move it to Wednesday. So, it will be on Wednesday, 31st of January. At the same time, 6 UTC.

And this time the APF call is going to be discussing the board consultation on public interest commitments and registry voluntary commitments. And it's a discussion that has started on the CPWG because it's a board consultation and ALAC has been invited to submit responses to the board on this consultation. So, the discussion has just begun at CPWG earlier today and it will continue for the next few weeks. But I thought APF members could use a little bit of primer, introductory and even background information so as to equip you with some knowledge that you can participate then effectively at the CPWG calls.

So, that is the purpose of having the APF call on a Wednesday instead of Thursday because the CPWG call is going to be on Thursday morning or Wednesday night for some people. So, we're trying to just catch that

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instead of doing the discussion after the CPWG call, we're going to do it before to provide you with some basic information or some knowledge to go into the CPWG call ready.

And with that, thank you very much for being here. Please watch out for the announcement. I'm pretty sure the staff is going to send out meeting invites for the next call on Wednesday. And if you're interested in participating in the board consultation on PICS and RBCs, please come to that call next week on Wednesday. Okay. With that, thank you everyone and have a good morning or afternoon or night or evening, wherever you may be. Take care.

SATISH BABU: Bye-bye.

YEŞIM SAĞLAM: Thank you, everyone. Enjoy the rest of your day, evening.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]