

ALAC UPDATES: APR - MAY 2024

Policy Development Activities

Statements Approved by The ALAC

[ALAC Correspondence on the Proposed Update to Recommendation 7 by the New gTLD Auction Proceeds Cross-Community Working Group \(CCWG-AP\)](#)

The ALAC, as one of the Chartering Organization of the gTLD Auction Proceeds Cross-Community Working Group (CCWG-AP), confirms that the Board's interpretation of the CCWG-AP Recommendation is correct.

Removing the phrase **“from the Independent Project Applications Evaluation Panel”** from recommendation 7 is entirely in line with both the intent and the understanding of the recommendation that the ALAC had when it accepted and ratified the Final Report of the new gTLD Auction Proceeds Cross Community Working Group (ALAC Document AL-ALAC-ST-0720-05-01-EN dated 31 July 2020 - <https://community.icann.org/download/attachments/143458359/AL-ALAC-ST-0720-05-01-EN.pdf>).

[At-Large Submission for the NETmundial+10 Consultation](#)

While Netmundial 2014 Principles remain a solid foundation for guiding the governance of the digital world, there are several reasons for which the NETmundial 2014 Principles need to be supplemented such as emerging issues, striking a balance between global interoperability and localized governance approaches, mechanisms for accountability transparency and oversight in decision making, rapid technological advancements

While observing the Principles' call for flexibility, defining roles and providing a framework that outlines possible contributions and boundaries, ensuring a smoother collaborative process. Enhanced Representation and Diversity, improved Accountability Mechanisms. Facilitation of Equal Footing, a formalized process for regularly evaluating the effectiveness of stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and Strengthening Dialogue and Consensus-building. By addressing these areas, the implementation of the multistakeholder principle can be significantly improved, ensuring that it not only remains flexible but also becomes more effective, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving landscape of global governance.

There needs to be better coordination among the different processes and initiatives to reduce duplication, better use of resources, avoid conflict, and enhance engagement and coordination in order to get better outcomes. The annual global and regional Internet Governance Forums (IGFs) could be the platform where the different processes come together to discuss and debate issues.

Implement structured engagement mechanisms to improve stakeholder participation in multilateral processes. This can be achieved by establishing advisory panels that represent multiple stakeholders.

For transparent communication, create clear channels for input and feedback to facilitate dialogue. Finally, providing training and resources will help ensure that multi-stakeholder participation is more meaningful and impactful.

An example of stakeholder participation is the IGF, which, while not exclusively focused on multilateral-driven processes, serves as a platform where stakeholders from various sectors, including governments, collaborate on an equal footing.

Yes, the IGF needs to be strengthened. There is a need to address the institutional gaps faced by the IGF in terms of capacity due to a lack of financial resources.

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) made several good recommendations to address the gaps and make the IGF ready to 'adapt, innovate, and reform' for the future. However, to implement all the recommendations at the practical level, there has to be more financial support to build the capacity of the IGF and IGF secretariat to do more.

Further, the LP-MAG letter to the Co-Facilitators of the GDC on 16 October 2023 made some recommendations to strengthen the IGF. Those could be reference points for improving and strengthening the IGF

Ref Para 7(i)) of Zero Draft: The role of multistakeholders should not be limited based on "their roles and responsibilities" nor involved "according to their respective mandates, functions and competencies;" (Para Rather, multistakeholders should be involved in each step of decision-making, implementation and review.

Secondly, the draft document suggests creating many new structures, such as the creation of a new panel on AI (49 (a)) convening an intergovernmental multistakeholder process to develop and agree on the above definitions and standards (38(b)); setting up the "High-Level Review of the Global Digital Compact" for reviewing the GDC process (65); " establish a dedicated office for coordinating digital and emerging technology: (Para 61).

Rather than creating new structures, the existing UN mechanisms should be utilized to support in monitoring the implementation and review progress of the GDC. One option for consideration could be for the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), the UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and with other UN agencies to be tasked follow-up and implementation with post-WSIS+20 follow-up implementation and the 2030 agenda.

The implementation roadmap could include CSTD providing periodic reporting by all stakeholders to the IGF to organize an annual discussion track for the periodic multistakeholder policy discussions, review, follow-up and engagement with the GDC. The United Nations Group on the Information Society promotes coordination within the UN system and brings in the

involvement of specialist agencies like the ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, and the Office of the High Commission of HR.

The WSIS+20 review process should consider the challenges posed by the Internet and digital technologies and engage the multistakeholder community from across the globe, especially developing countries, to deliberate and then respond to these challenges.

Additionally, the WSIS should renew the mandate of the IGF, a crucial instrument in fostering engagement between the different stakeholder groups towards realizing the SDGs and WSIS vision. Some examples include the work done by the national, regional IGS and youth initiatives and their integration into the IGF's work, the output-focused intersessional activities, etc.

1 NETmundial taught us the importance of urgency and proactivity in addressing Internet governance issues. Waiting for challenges to become crises is not an option; stakeholders must anticipate and act on emerging issues to safeguard the Internet's future.

2 NETmundial recognized the importance of capacity building and education in enabling effective participation in Internet governance, especially for stakeholders from developing countries and underrepresented communities.

3. The discussions at NETmundial reinforced the Internet's role in supporting sustainable development. Aligning Internet governance with the Sustainable Development Goals ensures the digital revolution benefits all segments of society

[String Similarity Review Guidelines](#)

The At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the String Similarity Review Guidelines, which is a matter of significant interest to end-users.

ALAC Support of the String Similarity Review Guidelines

The ALAC has had various concerns regarding potential conflicts between new gTLD names, and commends the authors for addressing many of them in the proposed guidelines. The ALAC does, however, have one significant remaining concern: Underlining. Many commonly used word processing software products (for example Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat), as well as many common web browsers (for example Google Chrome, Microsoft Bing, and Mozilla Firefox) automatically flag domain names by a) changing the font color of the domain name, and b) underlining the domain name. The former is not a problem, but the latter can cause confusion.

For example, one of the hundreds of languages which use the Latin script (Nuer) uses the Letter O with Combining Macron Below (◌ Unicode U+006F U+0331), which is therefore included in the repertoire. Readers who are not acquainted with Nuer are unlikely to even realize that such a symbol exists, and therefore are unlikely to even look for it. Thus, when they encounter example.◌oo, they are unlikely to realize that the first symbol in the .◌oo TLD is not the Letter O, and thus this is not the existing .ooo TLD.

There can also be confusion of even very common letters, such as the Latin small letter G (g in the sans serif fonts) vs the Latin small letter Q (q): consider underlining vs underlining.

This potential for confusion is not unique to the Latin script. For example, the Devanagari letter A (अ U+0905) and the Devanagari letter Ue (ए U+0976) are readily distinguishable to someone familiar with languages using the Devanagari script. But they become indistinguishable when an underline covers the line below.

We therefore suggest that consideration for confusion due to underlining be added to the considerations used in the String Similarity Review.

The ALAC looks forward to the next version of the document, which we hope will also include more details on the mechanics of how the automated and manual similarity reviews will be carried out.

Proposed Bylaws Updates to Limit Access to Accountability Mechanisms

1. ALAC was one of the chartering organizations of the CCWG Accountability that created the ICANN Fundamental Bylaws and the ALAC approved the final recommendations;
2. The ALAC was one of the chartering organizations of the CCWG New gTLD Auction Proceeds and the ALAC approved the final recommendations; and
3. The ALAC is one of the Decisional Participants in the Empowered Community.

The ALAC strongly supports the proposed Fundamental Bylaw amendment. Moreover, the ALAC commends the Board for revising the CCWG New gTLD Auction Proceeds recommendation to form a more general Bylaw should such a comparable accountability mechanism limitation be needed in the future.

Although any limitation in accountability is potentially onerous, the ALAC is comfortable that the three conditions proposed in the amendment only allow such limitations in situations where a more specific Bylaw limitation would also be approved by the Empowered Community.

The ALAC does, however, have one concern. Since this Bylaw amendment is general, it does not include the specifics of any limitations that it encompasses. Accordingly, someone referring to the Bylaws would have no idea as to what situations might trigger the limitation. The ALAC advises that the following sentence or equivalent be appended:

“The specific cases where the accountability mechanisms shall be limited or unavailable are posted on the Website at <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/accountability/limitations-en>” (or comparable URL).

There is already a precedent for including such a URL in the Bylaws in Section 4.2(h).

Section 4.2(h) To properly initiate a Reconsideration Request, all Requestors must review, complete and follow the Reconsideration Request form posted on the Website at <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/accountability/reconsideration-en>.

Requestors must also acknowledge and agree to the terms and conditions set forth in the form when filing

[Review of the Draft Application Support Program \(ASP\) Handbook - New gTLD Program](#)

The ALAC and At-Large Community believe that if the ASP Fund should not be strictly limited in that, where necessary, the ICANN Board should be amenable to enlarging the budgeted ASP Fund to the extent that all ASP applicants, no matter when they submitted their ASP applications during the ASP application period should be entitled to and receive the same percentage of application fee reduction and evaluation fee reduction. Allowing a different outcome is akin to institutionalizing some inequity that the ASP was established to remedy objectively.

We understand and support the call made in the (Draft) ASP Handbook to potential ASP applicants to submit their applications for Applicant Support as early as possible. However, we are also cognizant of the overall time remaining until the opening of the ASP application period (targeted for some time in Q4 of 2024) to not only create awareness of the ASP but to do so by way of outreach to parts of the world where potential candidates for ASP reside, and with sufficient details of the ASP in order for such candidates to consider participating and preparing their ASP applications for submission.

As it currently stands, placing a strict limit on the ASP Fund and proposing to suspend or close the ASP application period early because the ASP Fund is exhausted is giving early ASP applicants an advantage. For a support program, it seems inappropriate to give an advantage to some applicants over others. To address this inequity, we recommend that the ICANN Board commit to funding the ASP to the extent that it covers all qualified applicants to the same degree, no matter when they applied during the 12-month application window.