
YESIM SAGLAM:

Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to everyone. Welcome to the At-Large Consolidated Policy Working Group call taking place on Wednesday 15th of May 2024 at 14:00 UTC. We will not be doing a roll call due to the increased number of attendees as well as for the sake of time. However, all attendees both on the Zoom room and on the phone bridge will be recorded after the call. And to cover our apologies, we have received apologies from Tommi Karttaavi, Cheryl Langdon-Orr, Yrjö Länsipuro, Faheem Soomro, Mouloud Khelif, and Denise Hochbaum. And from staff side, we have Heidi Ullrich, Andrew Chen and myself, Yesim Saglam present on today's call and I will be also doing call management for this meeting. Before we get started, my first reminder will be regarding the real-time transcription service provided. Please do check the service. I'm going to share the link here on Zoom chat. And the other reminder will be to please state your names before speaking not only for the transcription but also for the interpretation purposes as well, please. Because as usual, we have Spanish and French interpretation provided. And with this, I would like to leave the floor back over to you, Olivier. Thank you very much.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND:

Thank you very much, Yesim and welcome everyone to this week's Consolidated Policy Working Group call. We have a busy meeting, I should say, today. We will first start with our work group and small team updates with the main update from Justine Chew on the new gTLD next round. And I'm not going to say SubPro now since I was told off last time. Oh, I did say it. Well, that's probably the last time I'll say it. And

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then once we've done this, we will be going to the policy statement updates with Avri Doria and Andrew Chen taking us through the policy pipeline that is an ongoing pipeline. There's some statements to be looking at. After that, Satish Babu will take us specifically through the public comment proposal for consideration for phase two initial report of the EPDP on internationalized domain names. And after this, Jonathan Zuck will take us through the ICANN 80 policy meeting preparations, talking points, etc. At this point, maybe if anybody has a change to be made to the agenda, an amendment, an addition, then please raise your hand and ask for it now. Now's the time. I am not seeing any hands up. So the agenda is adopted as it currently is on your screen.

The next part is to look at our action items. In fact, the only action item we had on our last call was to schedule this week's call. And there's still an internal deadline for contention resolution advice statement. We spoke about it last week. So I wouldn't be revisiting this topic yet. Things are in motion. The wheels are in motion. So we'll hear about this soon. Are there any questions or comments on any of our past action items? Not seeing any hands up. That's very efficient today.

We can therefore start swiftly on our workgroup and small team updates. Now, there is one update that was received, as per usual, from Steinar Grotterod. And he provided us with a quick update from the Transfer Policy Review policy development process. And you will see that update in writing at the bottom of the agenda. If you scroll down in the comments, you will find minutes from the GNSO TPR meeting on May the 14th, 2024. And here it says the working group finalized the recommendations of the change of registrar on data board policy.

ICANN staff will complete the work for the public comments. And the workgroup continued the recommendations connected to ICANN approved transfers and bulk transfer after partial portfolio acquisition. And I'm not going to read that acronym, because that probably is one of the worst ones. These recommendations have minor, if not zero, impact on end users, since these are registry registrar operations and attached to the recommendations. If you're interested in this, please have a look.

And while we're reading the comments, we can also have a look at the update from Carlton Samuels regarding the IANA functions review, which is also a process that we're following. And Carlton submitted his comment, his update in writing as well. The 12th scheduled IFR2 meeting took place at 11:00 UTC yesterday. The deep dive into the terms of the IANA functions contract as homework by the two teams continued with plenary discussion on the call. The focus this week was on feedback on sections pertaining to performance standard reporting as per Annex A, Statement of Work for Root Zone Management, Section 1, Root Zone Management, Section 2, Service Levels, and Section 3, Performance Level Requirements. Some clauses were noted for clarification through the PTI, public identifiers, and or ICANN legal. A few others were recommended for nice-to-have changes. The 13th meeting, of course, will take place in, is it next week? No, in a couple of weeks' time on the 28th, on Tuesday the 28th. I don't think that any of the two submitters are on the call, so if you have questions, I would say ask them on the list or ask them directly from Steinar and from Carlton. And with this very long intro, which does actually tick the box for two of our workgroups, I'm glad to hand the floor over now to Justine Chew for

the new gTLD next round. And notice I did not say the word after that. Over to you, Justine.

JUSTINE CHEW:

Thank you, Olivier, and I will continue to use subsequent procedures, because that is the name of the implementation review team. Subsequent procedures implementation review team. It's not next round implementation review team. Anyway, this is Justine for the record. Before I launch into the topic of discussion that I'm trying to get everybody's mind to today, I just want to make mention of two things. One, the first one being that I would like to commend the ALAC team that is participating in the transfer policy review working group, the PDP working group. It's great to see them, you know, being so attentive and participative in that working group.

The reason why I mentioned that is tomorrow council is going to meet for its monthly meeting. And on the agenda of council is one item, which is to do with the attendance rate of the transfer policy PDP working group. The council received a note from the chair of that particular PDP working group expressing concern at the drop in rate of participation. I believe mainly from the GNSO side, the GNSO participants. So it's great that Steinar and his colleagues on that PDP is making us proud.

The second comment that I wanted to make is that we had an IRT, a subsequent procedures implementation review team call yesterday, where we went through four of the topics of the draft text for the AGB, the next applicant guidebook that were put out for public comment

some time ago. I just want to make mention the fact that from the four topics, the implementation side of ICANN Org has very graciously accepted most of our comments. The only ones that were in discussion still has got to do with predictability framework and one that Alan Greenberg raised. We did manage to persuade some of the participants on that call to see it our way. So that is an achievement in itself. And I believe ICANN Org is going to rework some of the text that they proposed to be amended to reflect what we are saying. So more on that perhaps in that day.

I want to get into the topic of discussion for today, which is singulars and plurals. So Yesim, can we go to the next slide, please? So I'm not going to go into the background a lot. I'm basically fast forwarding to the present situation. I think all of you would have at least heard about the fact that most of the subsequent procedures recommendations have been either approved. There was a last batch that was approved recently. Six topics were still outstanding. And as at 18 of April, which is when council met the last time, four of those six topics, the supplemental recommendations for four of the six topics were approved by council. So they should have been sent onward to the board for consideration by now. The four topics out of the six is what you see in the screen. I'm not proposing to go through that. You can read it for yourself. I think I've spoken at length about these anyway.

The fifth topic was topic 22, registrant protections. And the result for that is that council decided that there wasn't any need to revise the original recommendation 22.7, which has to do with continuing operation instrument, COI. And the reason for that is because ICANN

Org themselves have stated that they are discontinuing the COI. So there's no reason to still hop on that particular instrument.

And the last topic, the sixth topic, was on string similarity evaluation, topic 24. And at the council meeting, this particular set of supplementary recommendations were withheld from the vote. And there was a number of reasons for that at that time. One of which was the possibility that ICANN staff would propose a solution or a mechanism to handle the diacritics issue. And the second one is the fact that the board was still expressing some concerns about the supplemental recommendations, there are three of them, for topic 24 and indicated that they might still not adopt, you know, take them up and adopt them.

So that sort of gave a warning bell to council and council decided, well, you know, okay, let's withhold the set of recommend supplemental recommendations and see what can be done. In the meantime, ICANN Org on the request of ICANN board has moved to develop a straw man proposal for a revised supplemental agreement for council's consideration regarding topic 24, in particular recommendation 24.3, which has got to do with singulars and plurals.

And so this issue has now been passed back by council on to the small team plus to see what can be done, whether we want to accept the proposition from ICANN Org, the straw man, and which I'm going to talk about the straw man in a little while. So that is the context of it. Yesim, can we go to the next slide, please?

So the input, so I'm just going to zoom in on 24.3, which has good to do specifically with the singulars and plurals. The essence of the conversation is whether the singular and plural versions of the same word should be allowed to be delegated into the root. That is the main high level question that we're grappling with. And the original 24.3, that was developed by the SubPro PDP working group mentions the use of stipulated or stipulated intended use. So it mentioned the phrase intended use, because, for example, if the classic example is spring and springs, and these two words could be the singular and plural of the same word, spring but they could also have different meaning. So essentially, if two different applicants were to apply for one string, spring, sorry, and the other one applies for springs with an S but both propose to use them in a different manner, then there could be scope for both or the strings to be delegated, subject to the commitment to use them in the particular way. So, for example, spring could be the season spring, whereas the springs could be the, you know, the object springs. So as long as if they use those two different TLDs in a different way, there wouldn't necessarily be confusion. So that was the concept of it anyway.

But the board is concerned because of the notion of intended use that goes into all sorts of, you know, issues about what we have been discussing through the board consultation about intended use, how do you actually enforce intended use without going into content, possibly content, and possibly violating ICANN's mission not to touch content. So that's a separate, you know, conversation altogether. But that is now creeping back into this notion of singular and plurals, where it was mentioned the original, as I said, the original recommendation proposed

to use intended use as a way of forcing the registry operator to operate the TLD in a specific manner. Siva, I'm going to not take questions at this point in time. Let me get through the presentation because there are things that I want to highlight, which is requiring input from folks. Thank you. So thank you for your patience.

And then the other thing also is that with the original 24.3, it talked about making ICANN do string similarity review beyond just visual similarity and going into singular and plurals. So the string similarity evaluation, the standard of it is just visual similarity. So if something is visually confusing to somebody, to the panel, at least the string similarity review panel, then they would be considered, you know, as not, shouldn't be allowed to be delegated, both of them, or more than one. So it would go into a contention set. That's the idea anyway. If the two strings or the three strings or whatever being applied for aren't already existing. So if there's a string that's already existing as TLD, and somebody applies for a string that is found to be confusingly similar to that existing TLD, then the applicant, the new string that's being applied for wouldn't be allowed to proceed. That's the essence of a string similarity review. It's basically to avoid confusion, confusion of the end user to the end user. Now with the singular and plural, that means that you're actually going beyond just visual similarity, because you have to check whether it is, you have to somehow check whether it is really singular and plural of the same word. So it's not just visual. And there are many words that, and we're not talking about just English, where typically you would just add an S to the back of the string to make it a plural, or the word to make it a plural. So you talk about other

languages, it's not just adding an S. So there are complications around those things.

Therefore, based on those concerns, the GNSO small team came up with a set of recommendations, supplemental recommendations, which is 24.3 A, B, and C. And in essence, they work towards removing the intended use elements. So there was no mention of intended use anymore in the proposed supplement recommendation. There was also an added exception by way of, for dot brands, if there are applications which, of which one is for a dot brand then there would be some kind of mechanism to allow both the singular and plural to proceed. And the supplemental recommendation also proposed to not just use dictionaries as a source for reference to determine whether something is a singular or plural, or something is the, yeah, a word is the singular or the plural of the same word. And to expand it to recognize linguistic resources.

And the outcome, as far as we know now, is that the board is still not happy with the supplemental recommendations. Essentially, they said that, you know, it's not likely that they will adopt the supplemental recommendations anyway, because it's still too difficult and too costly to implement. And that's why they've gone ahead and asked ICANN Org to come up with an alternative, and that's what we're looking at right now. Next slide, please.

Okay, so the essence of what the supplemental recommendation that the GNSO came up with, through the small team, was it targeted three things. One is to avoid consumer confusion, so to basically have a policy to prohibit the delegation of plural and singulars within the same

language or script. And that's basically to avoid confusion, really. And in essence, how that would work is, if there's an existing TLD of a word, a string and someone then applies for a string that is found to be the plural or the singular, of that TLD, then it wouldn't be allowed to proceed. If two fresh applicants apply for strings that are found to be singular and plural of each other, then both those applications should go into a contention set. That is the essence of how you would avoid having singular and plurals, you know, be both delegated.

They did say also that, you know, they wanted an exception for .brands. Meaning that singular and plural strings could still be delegated under certain conditions, which is that the .brand applicant is applying for it based on the registered trademark term. And they would commit to specification 13 obligations, which is that it's for their own use. And not resell as the normal model of second level domains. And they did say that, you know, if the conditions were such that the registry no longer met the spec 13 obligations, then that is considered as a breach and it would lead to the termination of TLD. And it wouldn't impact the existing objection mechanisms, in particular, the string confusion objections.

And 24.3c talked about the linguistic resources. So they were saying that, you know, ICANN should identify linguistic resources by which to use to determine whether something is a singular and plural or a set of words is a singular and plural of each other. For any language, for any specific language. But the important thing here is that the burden is still on ICANN to do the singular and plural checks. Next slide, please.

Okay, so that was the supplemental. I talked about the original recommendations, then I talked about the supplemental recommendations. And because the board did not like both of them, the both sets. They asked ICANN Org to come up with an alternate. So this is ICANN Org's alternate. It's called the Strawman Proposal at this point in time. And I'll just briefly run through and you'll see that I've highlighted certain portions of the text. This is not the whole text. I've kind of summarized it a little bit so that, you know, it's easier to digest.

So there are some things that you probably should take note of, which is that, okay, so it talks about having a mechanism for the program that would prevent singular and plural forms of the same word in the same language from being delegated. And here's the crux of it. So earlier I said that with the with the GNSO recommendations, the burden would still be on ICANN to check whether something is a singular and plural of each other. Here, ICANN Org is proposing that that burden be shifted to any requester. So it wouldn't be ICANN that would be forced to look at every single string that is being applied for to see whether something is a plural and singular of each other. But instead they would rely on someone notifying ICANN Org that something is a singular and plural of each other in a particular language. So there's a big shift in the burden of who is supposed to do the checking or who is supposed to highlight that there is an issue of singular and plural. So it wouldn't be ICANN that has to check every single string to see whether, you know, something is a singular or plural of each other.

It talks about here end user, applicant, and other community member. So I don't know what community, I mean, nobody really knows what community member here actually means. So we just take it that, you

know, anyone can, anyone at large in the world can put in such a request to ICANN to say, hey, you know, this string and that string are singular and plural of each other in this particular language, so please do something about it.

The requester can also go to the extent of, you know, once it alerts ICANN to this issue of singular and plural, can ask ICANN to put those two words into a contention set. Let me rewind a little bit. So how this mechanism is intended to, the outcome for it would similarly mirror what was intended by the GNSO recommendations, which is that if there is an existing TLD and a new string that's being applied for is considered as a singular or plural of that TLD, then that would be allowed. If it's two strings, not an existing TLD, but two strings, fresh strings, and they are notified by, to ICANN, ought to be singular approvals of each other, then ICANN Org would check that and then if it is so verified that they are singular approvals of each other, then those would go into a contention set.

Okay, so the method of request, exactly how that's going to work isn't clear at this point in time, but ICANN ought says that, you know, they would do that, they would come up with the exact method of implementation with the SubPro IRT. And when the request is made, the requester must inform ICANN of the two strings, or the, you know, whichever strings which they claim to be singular and plural of each other and also the language. Are

The element number five here is that ICANN is suggesting that the to come up with a list of dictionaries for the six UN languages and finalize this with the assistance from IRT and include a reference to those in the

applicant guidebook, Now, even though they said here that they're focusing on the UN six languages, it does not mean that the requester is prevented from alerting ICANN to a possibility of singular and plural in a language outside of the six UN languages you know, so long as they provide the source that they have relied on to be able to verify that claim. Next slide, please.

Okay, so this is where I said that the requester may ask ICANN to place the plural and singular forms of the same word in the same language into a contention set, and when does that happen? That can happen as soon as the strings are revealed, the platform strings are revealed, and it's suggesting that period of when a requester can put in a notice like that to run for not less than three months and must close at the end of the string confusion objection period, Now, I'm not going to get into the mechanics of what this actually means because I think there's some need to actually look at the flow of how the evaluation happens and see whether it's rational or not. But the point here is that they said that they will provide the concrete timings in the AGB, so whatever it is, they will indicate specifically in the AGB, this is the time period by which they would accept any requester's notification regarding a singular plural issue.

Okay, the next one is, yeah, okay, no worries, I already mentioned that, the fact that if it's two fresh strings, then they will go into contention set, if it's one existing TLD versus a fresh string, then the fresh string won't be allowed to proceed, And again here, the crux is, even though something could clearly be singular and plural of each other, ICANN is saying that if no requester no requester asks for something to be done, then both strings can proceed and can be delegated. Right, so that's the

so that is the implication of it so they're relying on someone to say, hey, there's a problem. If no one says there's a problem, then everyone's going to, ICANN's going to assume there's no problem, and they will allow the applications to proceed and possibly be delegated, so long as other conditions are met, because other, outside of the fact that it's just singular and plural of each other.

Okay, so that is the essence of the ICANN Org strawman proposal. Can we go to the next slide, please? I'm going to just run through some examples, and I have to thank Chris Disspain and Jeff Neuman for making this clear to me at the IRT call, anyway. So if you take, so I'm just giving you an example of what possibly might happen using the .bank TLD. So .bank is already delegated, it's an existing gTLD so to use that example, an application for .banks, b-a-n-k-s with an s could be subject to request, because bank and banks in English are singular and plural of the same word. So in this situation, if a request is made, then ICANN will reject .banks, because .bank is already delegated.

If an application for—okay, I can't say this because it's a German word, but it's b-a-n-k-e that could also be subject to request, that there is a problem, because b-a-n-k and b-a-n-k-e in German are singular and plural of the same word. Okay, I understand that bank and bank, b-a-n-k-e, have two different meanings, one could be a financial institution bank or bench, but the concept is the same. It's the singular and plural of the same word in German. So in that situation, if a request is made, then ICANN will also reject .b-a-n-k-e, because .bank is already delegated.

Third situation is with a .b-a-n-q-u-e-s that wouldn't be subject to a request under this situation, because that and bank, b-a-n-k-e, b-a-n-k-e in English, is not plural and singular of each other, neither are they in French or we assume that it's not the same as, it would be the same in any other language. So that the point being that they are not singular and plural of each other. So then if someone attempts to put in a request to say that, hey, this is a singular plural of each other, please do something about it, ICANN will reject it, because there is no issue of it being singular plural unless they can come up with evidence to say it is.

In the fourth situation, an application for b-a-n-q-u-e and another application for b-a-n-q-u-e-s could be subject to requests, because both strings are in French singular and plural of each other. So if a request is made, then ICANN will put these two strings into contention set, because neither of them are existing TLD. But the whole point about how it would work is that it's dependent on a request being made. Okay, so next slide, please, I think it's the last one, really.

Just to recap, the main difference between what GNSO has come up with so far and what ICANN is proposing in this strawman is there is a difference in the burden to act. So the burden to act under the ICANN Org strawman shifts from ICANN Org to a requester, whoever that may be. And this, the implication of this is that ICANN won't need to spend resources to check every single string in every single language to see whether their string is singular and plural of each other. ICANN will only be required to act when someone makes a request to, or notifies ICANN Org that this is a singular and plural of each other. And then ICANN looks at the request, looks at the source of the request, or the source material by which the request is based to see whether it is really

singular and plural of each other, then they will act in which case, if it is found to be singular and plural, there will, it will be such that neither, well, there won't be the issue of singular and plural being delegated, okay, one will have to be caught or both will have to be put in a contention set somehow.

The mechanisms and the burden of proof. Now, you notice that we have existing mechanism called the objection mechanism, which includes string confusion objection and legal rights objection. Those both involve costs because it's a filing fee and there is a burden of proof to be met before someone succeeds in objection. So, if you just suppose this objection filing against just a request so all the requesters do is just write into ICANN and say, hey I think these two strings are singular and plural of each other in this language, and this is my source material to prove that. So, there's no filing fee involved, it's just a letter, a note to ICANN so the burden is quite a lot lower. Is this a good thing? I don't know. You can argue that it would increase the accessibility for anyone to do something about it, to get a remedy because there is no filing fee involved, so there's no cost involved, you just have to write into ICANN Org for something to happen, or for something to be looked at, and for ICANN to take the necessary remedy if it's proven that it's singular and plural. Is that a good thing? I don't know, because the reason why I'm asking is because we do have existing mechanisms by way of the objection and the string similarity review that kind of try to catch these kind of things, but string similarity review does not look at singular and plural. And then the objection mechanism is kind of like to prevent confusion as well at the end of the day. I leave that up to you. And then there was a question of whether since it's so open that anyone can just

submit a letter, would it be subject to increased gaming? Question, don't know the answer, I'm hoping to get some feedback from people.

And what the ICANN Org strawman does not account for is the exception for .brands that the GNSO supplemental recommendation does. But ICANN Org is probably going to argue to say that we don't really need an exception for .brand if it's just going to be anyone can submit a request to say that it's singular and plural, and therefore we'll do something about it. So you can still apply that kind of situation to an existing TLD that is a .brand, same outcome. Okay, so I think that is it. Next slide, please.

Okay, yeah, all right, so my request to the group now is, and I'm sorry if I've taken too much time again, is that are there any questions that we want to ask of ICANN Org? Because this conversation is going to continue at the SubPro small team plus level in about two weeks' time, or one and a half weeks' time, so I can take questions back to find answers for, and also if there's any aspects out of the strawman that we should be concerned about and wish to raise for discussion. So Olivier, do you want me to run the queue, or do you want to run the queue?

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Justine, I'm actually putting my hand up for asking a question, so it'd probably be better if you do run the queue.

JUSTINE CHEW: Okay, so I'm going to ask Andrew to, or staff, to help me time check, okay, because I know I've gone over time, but you know, since we have hands—

AVRI DORIA: This is Avri jumping in. Since we've got two weeks for that, I'd like to start the discussion, get the hands that are up now, sort of call it a fixed queue for the hands up, and then continue the discussion because we've got two weeks before that group will be meeting again, so just to make sure we can get the rest of the schedule in, if that's

JUSTINE CHEW: Yeah. I was trying to avoid having to come back on next week because it's a horrible time for me, but never mind. Okay, no, go ahead, go ahead. So Avri, you're running the queue for me?

AVRI DORIA: Oh, So, okay, so Michael Pelage is the end of the queue, and hopefully, so anyhow, looks like we've got Sébastien first, please.

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET: Thank you very much for your presentation, and I have a question and maybe a suggestion. Why we are talking about requests? Why we are not going through what I will call crowd comments, or as we have crowdfunding? If we don't want to have one specific body, and eventually, not eventually, not even specific people to do that, it could be anyone from the users in this world who have concern, not really a

concern, but they know about the fact, and they can report it, and that will be a way to have all the singular and plural in the new gTLD applications. After the question of, do we need to open, to put together two of them for choice, at that time, maybe ICANN will need a requester, but I think it will be a good way to use our members, the members of the ALSes, to tell them, okay, if you find something, just tell us, or tell ICANN, and they will act or not. Thank you.

JUSTINE CHEW:

Okay, so I'm hearing that you are in favor of this request mechanism, and you can correct me if I'm misunderstanding.

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET:

Not request, I would like to avoid the question, the fact, if it's a request, it's somebody who is having a request to do something. I am talking about observers, people who look at what is happening in internet, and we can say, oh, there is something, I know it's plural and singular, and I need to inform somebody who is in charge of that, and it's not a request, I don't know how to call that, but anyone can say something.

JUSTINE CHEW:

Okay, so I think, let me clarify, so whoever you are suggesting, Sébastien, is a requester, so they can just put in a note, or they can just notify ICANN that, hey, there is a problem of singular and plural here.

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET: I don't think it's the right way to say, it's not a requester, it's not to say there is a problem, but it's to say, there is singular and plural, I know that, because it's my language, because it's, and I want to inform you that there is this here. After ICANN, other requesters, or somebody will need to request, but at least we will have a list of all the, I hope, of the singular and plural, without having all those stuff to be done. I know that it's maybe a question of wording, but I would like to open that to everybody, and not to requesters, that's my point, thank you.

JUSTINE CHEW: Okay, this mechanism that ICANN is proposing is open to anybody, it's just that whoever is putting in a notice is called a requester.

AVRI DORIA: it does seem to be a naming thing. They haven't gotten to the point of where they're actually naming it, they're just calling it a requester, so I think finding a better name for it is probably not a bad request. By the way, Christopher, I see you jumped into the queue, and I had closed it after Mike Palage, I just wanted to let you know, so can we go to Alan, please?

ALAN GREENBERG: Yeah, thank you very much, Alan Greenberg speaking. This overall subject has a long history, there was, in general, uniform agreement that we had a problem in the last round. The registries came into the SubPro process and made a suggestion which resulted in this recommendation on how to avoid it. And at first glance, this sounds like

a reasonable way to address the original problem, preserve the intent of the methodology, how to solve it, and get around the concerns the board had. It clearly is subject to how this is going to be implemented.

I have two specific issues. One is it's unclear from what Justine talked about, who is going to verify the claim? Is there a new panel, is there a process by which someone can appeal it? All of those things clearly need to be clarified. I don't need to know what they are here, but clearly that seems to have been left out, who's going to do the verification, and what's the methodology for that.

The other thing is the wording implies, but doesn't quite say, sorry, the wording does not say clearly if we're talking about string similarity in the string, in the same character set. In other words, if I come up with two Latin character strings which are the singular and plural sounding of two Hindi words, does that count as singular and plural, or must it be in the string in which the singular and plural exists? I assume the latter, but it doesn't say that, and it probably needs clarification. Thank you.

JUSTINE CHEW: Okay, thanks for that. Next.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Thank you Justine. I think I'm the next person. A question and a comment. I guess the comment is, if my understanding is correct, when one applies for a new gTLD, you don't need to specify the language of the new gTLD, is that correct?

JUSTINE CHEW: You do, actually. But it doesn't come into play when you're trying to submit a notice to say that something is singular or plural or something.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Yeah, so that's the question, because at that point, well, it certainly raises a question, because you could say you're applying in a specific language when there is actually no, there's no plural or singular to that string, there's no connection between the two, and it would be, it might be in another language. And the other thing is, what happens if you apply for a string in, let's say, Swahili? Would then ICANN have to make provisions for languages that it doesn't know? That's it, thanks.

JUSTINE CHEW: Yeah, that's the reason why ICANN wants to shift the burden, because they don't want to be responsible for checking every single language. It's quite a huge burden, really. So they want for people to tell them if there is a problem, and then show them why it is a problem. And back to your question about, it doesn't matter what the applicant or the TLD itself, the language that is being used. From a requester point of view, it does not matter. The requester is only saying that this string and this string, whichever language it appears in, is singular and plural of each other in my language, that is a problem. Next.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY: Thanks, Justine. And apologies in advance if I'm asking a naive question. But prima facie, I see ICANN is shifting the entire responsibility on the community at large, or whoever is actually raising the request.

However, ICANN is running the gTLD process. So there has to be some amount of responsibility. I'm not saying complete, but at least some amount of responsibility. One cannot just wash off the hands. That's one.

Another is there was a concern of the system being abused or gamed by requests or concerns coming in. So has there been some impact analysis done that, on having the system vis-a-vis, trying to address the concerns of the last time, some kind of impact analysis that this kind of requests may come, which can hamper genuine submissions, gTLD applications, etc. So is there some kind of study which ICANN has done on this?

JUSTINE CHEW:

There is no data, because this request is new. It didn't exist in the last round. The only mechanism is that...

AMRITA CHOUDHURY:

No, I do understand, but there are still analysis done that on basis on probabilities. So that's where I'm coming, because it's a huge decision. And if you look at it, many governments may not like it that ICANN, it will seem to many as ICANN washing away their hands.

JUSTINE CHEW:

The answer to your question about whether any analysis is done, I think it's no. As far as I know, none. And Avri can correct me if I'm wrong. So I'm not aware of any study, such study.

AVRI DORIA: Thank you. Now that's the, I'm coming back to you to close it up for now, Justine. What I'm recommending, I've seen that there's more people that want to talk, is that we go on with the agenda, that if we have any time left at the end, instead of giving it back, we can come back to this discussion for that, that we could take this discussion to the list. But if there's more pending conversation later, then we'll have to stick it on next week with apologies to Justine. But Justine, now to let you close up and sort of deal with the issues for now.

JUSTINE CHEW: It's okay. Let's move on to the next agenda item.

AVRI DORIA: Okay. So you had no responses you wanted to give. A lot of good comments. The washing their hands metaphor is quite good. Let me hand it back to you for a second, so that you could close out your section. Olivier.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Thank you very much, Avri. The section is indeed closed. And I can therefore ping pong it back to you with a backhand and to you and Andrew Chen. So you're not alone. The two of you are going to have to hold this one.

AVRI DORIA:

Well, thank you. So I'll get started on it. And basically there's the quick review, a summary of where we're at. And the one that is in the focal point for today, and we've got an item on it after this, this review part is the initial report of the EPDP on the international domain names. So that one [inaudible] and we're going to come back to it. So I'll skip over that for now. Although we can see it has a schedule and final statement is 15 May. So that's why we're going to come back to it and why I wanted to make sure there was time.

Otherwise, what we have in the hopper at the moment is the ongoing work that Jonathan's got on At-Large workspace, ALAC advice on contention resolution in the next round. And I don't know, Jonathan, if you had any words you wanted to say on it today in terms of its status and what you're doing next. Otherwise we can move on.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Yeah, just work continues. I've got both Jorge and Nigel engaged on it and they've got their internal processes and I'm trying to be patient. Yeah. So that's my update.

AVRI DORIA:

Thank you. Fantastic. Kind of thing I was hoping for. Then in terms of looking at the upcoming, so that's it for what's in process. In terms of upcoming in May, there's still two in the OFB and then in June, there's another one in the OFB. So we're not going to cover them. I think there's a bunch coming towards the CPWG in time after June, but they're not quite there yet. So at some point it may be worth taking a

longer view on some of these subjects so that people can prep themselves for it. Andrew, is there anything I forgot to say, please?

ANDREW CHEN: Thanks, Avri. No. Perfect job.

AVRI DORIA: Thank you. So anybody have any questions or comments on that before we move on to five and a discussion of the phase two initial report on EPDP on IDN public comment? Any comments before we move on to that? Let me see, hands, hands here, nothing. Okay then. So Satish and a few other people have been working on a public comment. And Satish, can I hand it over to you now?

SATISH BABU: Thanks very much. Can we have the summary document, please? Can we make it bigger? So we had submitted or circulated the draft statement based on the CPWG meeting a couple of weeks back, where we had made a presentation and also three polls, which tried to assess the input from the CPWG. And we got fairly useful input. And based on that, we had composed the initial draft. And that draft has been circulated. And we have received four comments on the draft. And in this session, over the next 15 minutes or so, we hope to complete this. And go to, I mean, the next step would be to kind of claim the document and then make the submission. And staff have very kindly agreed to do the submission on behalf of ALAC.

So the following are the, so this is with input from Hadia, Abdulkarim and Justine. Thanks, Justine. Justine stepped in even though she's not formally a part of the team. So the comments that we received are from two people. One is Avri, other is [inaudible]. So Avri's comment was on the implementation guidance seven, where she suggested, why don't we, so the current text says, ICANN org with gTLD registries and other relevant stakeholders. Avri suggested, why don't we add ccTLDs too?

So we took a closer look. Now, both implementation guidance seven and recommendation six pertain to the same charter question C5. And the way these are defined, these entities are defined, are slightly inconsistent between the two, although it pertains to the same question. So taking into consideration Avri's comment, we would also use this opportunity to make it consistent with the recommendation number six. And so we recommend that we use the language used in six, which is registry operators, not specifying ccTLD or gTLD. ICANN Org and relevant stakeholders. So this will close the gap and also make it consistent. So this is the first one. But before I proceed, I want to ask Hadia or Justine if they have any comments. Hadia, do you have any comments on this?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: No, thank you so much, Satish.

SATISH BABU: Perfect. Thanks. Justine, you had something to say about this. Do you want to speak out?

JUSTINE CHEW: Yeah, thanks. This is Justine. So just pertaining to Avri's comment about ccTLDs, I just had this notion that we are, this PDP, EPDP is a PDP, which only makes policy for gTLDs. So we don't go into the realm of ccTLDs. I mean, the fact that you just use generic registry operators that could mean, imply both ccTLDs and gTLDs, but I'm not going to take that step to say so, because I think you'll probably get some pushback from the EPDP. But just to have it as registry operators and leave it as that could be a way forward. Thanks.

SATISH BABU: Thanks, Justine. Avri, do you want to make any comments on this? Y

AVRI DORIA: In some ways, it's a notion of, from the vantage point of At-Large and ALAC, I was thinking that, yes, while this is a gTLD PDP, there was also sort of that sense of admonition or of request at the beginning of this all, that the two try to stay coordinated. And so I was thinking that this was one of those opportunities to sort of point out that. But it's a nit, and I think this works fine. So I'm sort of arguing against, it's a GNSO PDP, so who cares about CCs is not necessarily relevant, but bringing it broader, but I'm fine with the solution that's been given. Thanks.

SATISH BABU: Thanks, Avri. Perfect. Now, the next three are very strong comments from Evin on the fact that—Hadia, please go ahead.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much. This is Hadia for the record. I think Avri already said that, but I would just like to mention that the board did provide a recommendation saying that both the IDN PDP, PDP4 for ccTLDs and the IDN EPDP for gTLDs need to be consistent. And I remember in the phase one report, we did actually look into this consistency, and we did actually have some meetings with the team of the IDN PDP for ccTLDs in order to ensure consistency.

I do, of course, realize that ccTLDs do not provide recommendations for second level domains. They stop at the top level domain, while gTLDs could actually go into recommendations for a second level domain. Nevertheless, as Avri said, consistency is important because it provides, it avoids user confusability and also ensures a good user experience and an improved user experience. And also it is in line with the board initial recommendation. Thank you.

SATISH BABU:

Thanks, Hadia. Yeah, so the need to be synchronized with the ccPDP4 was actually an important consideration, especially for phase one. So we will move on to the next three recommendations. And all the three are about even insisting that we should only touch those recommendations that have a direct end-user impact. So before we get into the specifics, I'd like to state my general opinion on this, my personal opinion. It's not binding on anyone else. This is one of those places where At-Large and ALAC may have slightly different, what should I say, positions. Now, At-Large is all about end-user concerns.

ALAC is also about end-user concerns, but as a participant in some of these processes might be required to take a step further beyond direct end-user kind of impact into realms where there are not direct but indirect end-user impact.

So some of these, so the first one here, chapter question C and C-A. So our statement says that we prefer to have or recommend a coordinated approach in identifying a mechanism. So Evin's point was that how will this impact end-users who are aware of none of the relevant processes, but see only the end result.

So based on inputs from Justine and Hadia also, we recommend that we explicitly clarify what is the end-user impact. Although it may not be, so his point was, they facilitated the goal of minimizing the risk of confusability. That had to be made explicit. So what we're proposing is that an implementation guidance, not a recommendation, which would not be immediately binding or would not be binding at all, and make it explicit how this is going to impact. So what we're saying here is that this process of having a coordinated mechanism or an approach would facilitate the goal of minimizing risk of confusability to end-users. That's one.

The next one is about IDN tables. This is again an area where registries had a lot of concerns because the harmonization of IDN tables would kind of be a very costly and time-consuming effort for them. So the EPDP did not make any recommendation. But ALAC after discussion, we felt that we should have a transition towards machine-possible standards-based code, standard-based representation for IDN tables. That is what we put in the original statement. So we said that it will

improve their manageability also because for the future, it will make it future-proof, more resilient, but even feel that ALAC has no business whatsoever in commenting on the manageability of variants because this logic is that end-users see nothing but the end result.

But then again, as ALAC representatives to the EPDP, we necessarily have to go beyond that kind of a concern, which is very broad. And our concerns cannot stop at that point, and we need to go beyond. So we have actually added, we suggest adding the text in establishing consistency for IDN tables across TLDs and across registry operators, which is a key goal of harmonization. So this consistency is what we are highlighting as an important consideration, which will eventually impact end-users.

The last one is something that we can directly relate to. This is about when you have a bunch of variant domain names. Now, variant domain names are composed of variant gTLDs, and at the second level, variant labels at the second level. So there could be variants at both levels, and this leads to a multiplication of the numbers involved. So if you have a gTLD that has got two variants, and you have the second label which has got three variants, you then have three to six variant domain names. That is the combination of gTLD and the second level.

Now, the first issue here is about the cost. If you have the whole thing as one bundle, and we do the registration as one, which is what ALAC is suggested, that we make it explicit, then the cost impact is of one registration. But if you have it in any other way, because the EPDP is leaving it open, they're not saying that we should follow this one single registration, although there was a lot of support for it in the discussion.

But a few registries had some technical problems, like legal or contractual problems, so the EPDP did not make any recommendation.

But what ALAC felt was that we should probably please ask for some guidance, implementation guidance, which says at some point we have to kind of have a single registration. So it is not only the cost, I mean the fee, but it's also the fact that while registration, while renewal, while transfer, if you don't have it in one bundle, you have to then do it individually. So [inaudible] every year when you renew, you have to do it six times, which makes it very inconvenient for the end user.

So [inaudible] does not seem to feel that there is an end user impact here. So if we should clarify this, then we suggest adding the text not only from a cost perspective, but also in terms of the ease of operation, such as registration, renewal, and transfer. Given that a variant domain name set with variants at the top and second levels can be large, separate registration for each domain would mean that each of the above operations will need to be done multiple times.

Now, again, one of the reasons is that why we had not made this explicit in the first draft was that we were writing the draft for the EPDP team to look at. And they instinctively understand this because they have the background. But I realized that it is important to spell it out, not for the EPDP team, but for our own community, for any ALAC member or At-Large member who reads the document later. For their benefit, I think we have to make it explicit. This is my personal position, but Hadia and then to Justine on this. Hadia, do you have anything to add?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Nothing to add from my side. Thank you so much, Satish.

JUSTINE CHEW: Justine here, just to support your proposition to make it explicit.

SATISH BABU: So I guess we don't have much time, but does anyone else have any questions or comments on this?

AVRI DORIA: Yeah, there is some time. So if anybody has a comment, please raise your hand. If not, the question I'll be asking, is this ready to pass on up to the ALAC for their vote? And does anybody object to that and speak up, and speak up, please? I see nobody jumping to speak up. I see no hands. So I'm assuming that this is ready to go with the changes as discussed and ready to go into its next process. Anything else need to be done on this?

SATISH BABU: Yeah, so the document would require to be cleaned up. There is a bunch of edits in that. So that I, we will do it tomorrow, and then pass it on to Andrew for the further, for the voting and the process.

AVRI DORIA: Okay, thank you. Andrew, is that all ready to show up or something else? Yes, Olivier.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Yeah, thanks very much, Avri. I was just going to comment that it's quite nice to see the process that was used to come up with the input, both making use of the Google Docs, but also be making use of these excellent tables. And this should be tracked, and of course, kept in our archives. And maybe we should encourage that others, when they build their statements, also make use of such tools. That's all, just a procedural thing. Thank you.

AVRI DORIA: Thank you. Yeah, no, it really is quite good and quite easy to work through. So, Andrew, has everything been done that needs to be done for this to move on?

ANDREW CHEN: Yeah, as Satish had noted, we'll clean up the document and then we'll proceed with the vote tomorrow.

AVRI DORIA: Fantastic. Thank you very much. And that takes us to the end of this one. Thank you, Satish for that. Now we go to, okay, where's the agenda? I know I have it somewhere. Yes. So that takes care of that. Then the next thing we had, which I assume was a quick one, was for Jonathan to check in with us about ICANN 80 policy meeting and let us know if he's got any hot updates on topic sessions, talking points, policy forum, wiki, anything like that. Jonathan, the floor is yours.

JONATHAN ZUCK: Yeah, thanks. It's a good returning topic. I mean, we're still waiting on two big things out of Org related to the applicant support program. One is the communications plan and the other is the funding plan. But we're expecting them soon. Justine actually emailed out something recently about them coming up shortly. So I think around the end of the month is when we'll see those. So that's still going on. And we're still looking for the diacritics work to begin as well. So I think in short, things are on the horizon, but not quite ready for us to discuss. But Justine's got her hand up. Go ahead.

JUSTINE CHEW: Yeah. So it's been announced that the ASP outreach and engagement plan, whatever that means, is going to be presented at the next IRT meeting, which is tomorrow, I believe. So what I would suggest is the few of us who are on the IRT, including Cheryl, myself, Avri, Greg, and a few others, those of us who are going to be on that call, we do an individual assessment of whether there is something to be discussed or not, because we really need to see what Org is going to tell us and then decide whether we need a session at ICANN 80 to talk about whatever we need to do, if that makes sense.

JONATHAN ZUCK: It does, Justine. Thank you. So that's the update. And then I think Sally Newell Cohen has confirmed her willingness to come and meet with us during the ICANN meeting, should the three or four of you sort of reach a conclusion that we ought to have some conversations internally.

AVRI DORIA: Fantastic. Thanks. Any quick questions for Jonathan? Even if they're not so quick, but anyway. Then I'll close that item. And the next thing we went to was any other business. We have 15 minutes left. We have a quick two minutes at the end to do the next meeting calendaring. So, we can give 10 minutes to continuing the discussion that I rudely cut off. And Christopher, who had put his hand up and quite graciously dropped it when I said he had come in at the end of the queue, would be the first speaker I would go to. And then I'd ask anybody else that had a pending comment that I cut off by cutting off the discussion would raise their hand. And are you ready to stand by again, Justine, for catching comments and answering if there are any answers needed? So, Christopher, if you'd like to go first, please feel free.

CHRISTOPHER WILKINSON: Thank you. This is now superfluous, because what I wanted to do was to explain to Sébastien and others that the request concept did not imply that it was only interested parties who would be eligible to request. I think Justine dealt with this. The concept of request, whether it's the best word or not, is another matter. But the concept of request in this context of this discussion is that everybody would be eligible, potentially, to make a comment on these matters should the need arise. So, with that, I will thank you.

AVRI DORIA: Thank you very much for reiterating that. And I think that's good. Okay, Alan, please.

ALAN GREENBERG: Yeah, thank you. I just want to make a brief comment on the ICANN washing its hands of the responsibility. I think what was suggested was a neat way to bypass ICANN having to check every combination in every possible language. And ICANN will still have the responsibility in a to-be-defined way of verifying that this is indeed a conflict or not. I think it's a neat solution, and I don't think it's washing the hands at all. I think it's delegating to people who have more expertise than ICANN ever will in every language of the world. And it's not a particularly heavy burden. So, I think it's an elegant way of addressing the problems. Thank you.

AVRI DORIA: Thank you. Have we exhausted the pent-up demand for commenting on this so that Justine can go away without needing? Yes, Olivier, please. And I should have passed this back to you since it was your agenda item that I moved into AOB. So, please forgive me. But, Olivier, please.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Yeah, thanks very much, Avri. Actually, it was your agenda item. I claim no responsibility whatsoever. No, just on the point that Alan made, actually, I guess the proof will be in the implementation itself, as with many of the ICANN processes. So, it would be, if the ALAC was to comment on this, I would definitely be careful about not assuming one thing or another and just drafting things in a way that makes it neutral enough, but also to the point, making sure we make our points known and not just think, oh, we assume this and we assume that. That's all. Thank you.

JUSTINE CHEW:

Thank you. So, there is no written comment to be submitted, because this is a discussion at the small team of the SubPro, the small team plus. The small team plus is just, at this point, considering the straw man from ICANN. So, we are at liberty to ask questions. We are at liberty to make comments. This is not a public comment or anything like that. So, that's why I'm seeking input on what sort of questions you want me or Avri or Greg, because three of us are on that small team plus, to raise, to clarify, and to maybe comment on what are the concerns that we might have from looking at the strawman at this point in time, whether there are gaps, whether there is something really, really obviously missing that we need to make sure that it's addressed. Those are the kind of input that I'm seeking.

So, just to recap what I've written down by way of notes is that we may need to relook at the name requester. So, now, it's just a bookmark kind of thing at the moment. So, we don't actually have to go with requester, but that's the term that ICANN is using for the time being. The requester can be anyone. It's not anyone within the community, necessarily. It can be anyone in the world. And in that respect, I would say that if we're going to go with this mechanism, then there has to be responsibility taken up by ICANN Org to create awareness of it somehow, okay, and sufficient awareness, so that if you're going to reach anyone who has a particular interest, whether they are part of the community or not, then they need to know that there's this opportunity to submit a request.

We've had two conflicting views about the mechanism, one being a reasonable way to resolve this single plural issue, that it preserves the

methodology that the GNSO recommendations tried to capture versus some people argued that it's ICANN washing the hands of a responsibility that they're supposed to be taking on as the global technical coordinating body.

My personal take on this, and this is personal as well, is I would probably land on the side of Alan, because if you look at the implications itself if we don't have some kind of request mechanism that ICANN is proposing, then the burden really is on ICANN to check every single word. Alan brings up a good point that does ICANN really have the expertise to check every single language? Are we then asking ICANN to panel far-flung experts just to look at these kind of things? Is it that bad that we try to ask people around the world if they want to make a comment to put in something that there's a problem? Maybe there has to be a balance somehow that if there is something really, really obvious that it should be caught that is a singular and plural then maybe we should compel ICANN to take that step. If it's something obscure that no one really knows unless it's a linguist expert that knows in that particular language, then we should probably rely on the community to put in the request.

There was concerns about gaming. So if we could try and possibly ask for a way to stem gaming, I don't know how, I don't know in what manner, but raising that possibility might be a way forward also. Then there is the actual mechanics itself of who actually does the review. Is there a peer mechanism to any claims that's made? That is, I think, will be part of the implementation that ICANN is proposing to do with the IRT, so we won't necessarily have data on that or any details on that at the moment.

There was the other one about cross-script character, okay, so I will go back and listen to the recording to make sure that I get that particular essence of that comment correctly, correct? And yep, that was the summary of what I captured. If anyone thought that I've missed anything, please tell me.

AVRI DORIA: In the conversation while you were talking, three hands came up. We've only got two, three minutes left of the extra time I stole from AOB, so please, Olivier, is your hand a remainder or is it a new hand?

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: It's a new hand, but it's very quick.

AVRI DORIA: Okay, so please, so Olivier, Bill, and then Alan, and then we'll cut it and conversation can continue on list. Olivier.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Thank you, Avri. Thanks for this summary, Justine. I think it's a good summary. I was just going to add one more point. Somehow, I can't help thinking we are still reasoning 20th century. I have, in the time that we had a bit of time on the call here, used Copilot for Windows, which is an AI engine, and I've asked Copilot for various plurals and singulars of some words and so on, and guess what? It gives an answer. I don't know if it's right because it's given it to me for 17 different languages. I tried with Hotel, and they gave me 17 different languages, and it might be

able to do better in the future, but point that out as well, that we might just be looking at a short-term solution, and in the future, the machine will do it.

AVRI DORIA: And we may have many people who each go to their favorite AI agent and do what you did. Bill.

BILL JOURIS: Yeah, Justine mentioned the possibility of ICANN impaneling a group of experts to look at these. I think the chances of that are zero. We looked at the IDN project, and at least for the Latin script, we had zero linguists, zero experts, and we had people who spoke perhaps a dozen of the 200 languages that we looked at, and I just see no chance of a panel of experts that can do anything useful. So I pray that Olivier's thought about an AI which will do this. I certainly hope so, but if we don't have that, we're in real trouble on this. Thank you.

AVRI DORIA: Okay, thank you, Bill. And Alan, you get to close it up, and then we can take it to the list.

ALAN GREENBERG: Very, very quickly, there's a mention of gaming. I think we can't use the term gaming. We have to be specific about what it's talking about. Gaming in general is complaining about something that is legal, but you

don't happen to like it. I think we need more definition if we're going to use the term. Thank you.

AVRI DORIA: Okay, yeah, thank you. Yeah, I always think that accusations of gaming is the best game in town. So, okay, thank you for that discussion, [inaudible]

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: It appears that Avri's line might have dropped or has issues. I think she was just closing off on this section, so I should just close off the section and thank Justine. Is there anything else you wish to add, or we're okay?

JUSTINE CHEW: Just to say thank you to everyone for their input and for the discussion. It's really helpful.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Okay, thanks very much, Justine. And so, our next thing is any other business, the next agenda item, which I guess is the last thing. Am I seeing some hands up? No, I'm not seeing any hands up, so thanks very much for this. That takes us to the end of our call and finding out when our next call will take place.

YESIM SAGLAM: Thank you, Olivier. So, according to the rotation, next week it will be at 19:00 UTC on Wednesday, 22nd of May. Thank you.

OLIVIER CRÉPIN-LEBLOND: Thank you very much. And that's pretty much the end of our call. Thank you so much. Thanks to our interpreters, to our staff, to everyone who has helped with today's call and provided updates, excellent updates as well. Please follow up on the list. Thanks to the transcriber as well, always very helpful. And by the way, there's always a survey when you close your Zoom, survey about transcription. Please do answer it if it's helpful because it's still some, well, you need to give the feedback. And that's pretty much for today. So, have a very good morning, afternoon, evening, or night. And has Avri made it back? No, it looks like she's cut off. Well, thanks to Avri then for having co-chaired this call and done an excellent job. And again, we're on time. Amazing. Goodbye

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