

ICANN Engagement Strategy in the Middle East

Final Document

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1 Executive Summary

Strategic goals for ICANN engagement in the Middle East are to achieve the following:

- Foster two-way engagement between ICANN and the broader Internet community in the region;
- Build strong and competitive domain name industry in the region;
- Promote multi-stakeholder Internet governance mechanisms in the region.

ICANN has coordinated the formulation of a Middle East Strategy Working Group (MESWG) to develop a strategy to achieve the above mentioned strategic goals. These goals are divided into three strategic focus areas, namely: *DNS security and stability*, *Domain name industry*, and *Internet governance ecosystem*. The following matrix summarizes the objectives, recommendations, actions, and metrics proposed in each focus area to achieve the proposed goals.

	DNS Security and Stability	Domain Name Industry	Internet Governance Ecosystem
Objectives	<p>Develop relevant capacity, resources and Internet infrastructure in the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build awareness and understanding of stakeholders for the importance of DNS security and stability • Strengthen technical know-how and capacity of stakeholders • Develop Internet infrastructure to strengthen DNS security and stability • Cooperate with law enforcement agencies (LEAs) for keeping the DNS secure and stable 	<p>Build the domain name industry in the region and strengthen the overall ecosystem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness among relevant stakeholders of the domain name industry • Foster collaboration among TLD operators on exchanging best practices • Stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship in Internet related industries 	<p>Promote engagement with and participation of relevant stakeholders in relevant fora:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote multi-stakeholder Internet governance mechanisms • Foster healthier representation from the region in ICANN constituencies • Promote engagement from the Internet community in the region
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness activities on policy issues for policy makers and LEAs • Awareness activities on operational issues for registries, registrars, and service providers • Develop and strengthen DNS infrastructure in the region • Technical assistance to LEAs and CERTs in understanding DNS and ICANN policies • Collaborate to develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create awareness campaigns on the potential of the domain name industry • Create more awareness pertaining to future rounds of new gTLDs • Facilitate best practice sharing among ccTLDs • Create awareness of entrepreneurs and encourage them to engage in domain name related business • Develop regional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen ICANN representation in the region • Stimulate engagement in global and regional Internet related fora • Promote and support national and regional multi-stakeholder initiatives • Improve ICANN outreach and raise awareness of ICANN

	the requisite IDN infrastructure	expertise and know-how in different aspects of the domain name ecosystem	
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct training on challenges associated with DNS security and stability • Conduct training on use of conventions and best practices to combat cybercrime, and DNS emergency response • Identify and train on tools for assessing and reporting on the health of the DNS • Identify and train on use of software, tools and processes to plan and manage DNS • Plan and conduct contingency exercises • Train on relevant technologies, including DNSSEC, RPKI and IPv6 • Adopt “train the trainer” model • Increase number of root server instances • Promote secondary DNS hosting • Develop an IDN Label Generation Ruleset (LGR) • Participate in efforts related to registration data definition and validation to support Arabic script community • Engage with technical community to address challenges related to use of IDN variants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with other stakeholders to conduct roadshows, workshops, and seminars on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Registry / Registrars model ○ Dispute resolution policies and WHOIS ○ New gTLD program ○ Best practices of ccTLD operations, ASCII and IDNs ○ Impact of domain name industry and promotion of online services • Carry out a baseline survey and economic study on domain name industry • Partner with governments and SME incubators and explore possibility of financing • Guidance and support to accredited registrars from the region • Address challenges facing potential registrars with regard to financial, legal and technical requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase ICANN fellowship opportunities to the region • Establish ICANN ambassador program • Liaise with and support existing Internet governance mechanism (e.g. Arab IGF) • Organize outreach programs to stimulate participation in ICANN and Internet Governance fora • Organize capacity building programs to simulate models for a multi-stakeholder policy development process • Support the creation of remote hubs for ICANN meetings • Train the trainers and help develop material that can be integrated in academic curricula
Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of awareness and training activities addressing DNS security and stability for policy makers and LEAs • Number of awareness and training activities addressing DNS security and stability for technical community • Number of trainers trained on DNS security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of ASCII ccTLD registrations • Increase in number of IDN ccTLD registrations • Increase in number of Arabic script IDN ccTLDs • Increase in number of registrations under new gTLDs from the region • Increase in number of ccTLD registrars • Increase in number of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in ICANN outreach to the region • The number and nature of stakeholder representation of participants in events in the region • The number and nature of stakeholder representation of speakers in events in the region

	<p>and stability aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of trainings conducted by previous trainees • Number of secondary ccTLD hosting instances in the region • Increased number of root server instances in the region • Arabic script LGR for the root • Report on Arabic script requirements/conventions for registration data • Training and dissemination material related to security and stability challenges and recommendations in using Arabic script IDNs and publishing registration data 	<p>ICANN accredited registrars from the region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of successful new gTLD applications from the region • Number of registrants per capita, compared to other regions • Number of domain names per online business (how many of those domains registered under ccTLDs and how many under gTLDs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number and nature of stakeholder representation of instructors in orientation/capacity building workshops in the region • The number of attendees and frequency of attendance at ICANN meetings from the region • The number of individuals from the region being granted fellows to attend ICANN meetings • The number of new regional members joining ICANN SOs/ACs • The number of individuals nominated to and selected by NomCom, or elected through their constituencies to become members of ICANN Board and SO/AC Councils. • More effective participation from the region in working groups or other activities. • Number of comments received from the region through ICANN public comments process • Increase in ICANN presence in the region in terms of staff, ambassadors and/or offices • Increase in participation from the region in other relevant fora
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2 Introduction

2.1 Working Group Background and Terms of References

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) was founded in 1998 to coordinate at a global level Internet naming and numbering resources. Through its Global Partnerships team (became Global Stakeholder Engagement in a recent restructure), ICANN has been working closely with stakeholders from all over the world to stimulate engagement in ICANN process. This has resulted in increased participation in ICANN constituencies from regions around the world, including the Middle East. Yet, there is more to be done to make ICANN engagement more effective and more global.

Under the current leadership of ICANN, internationalization of the organization and globalization of engagement is becoming a cornerstone of all initiatives going forward. The African community has taken the lead in developing a regional engagement strategy through a working group of community members that was put together following the ICANN meeting in Prague in June 2012. The strategy was concluded and presented few months later at the ICANN meeting in Toronto. While the implementation of the Africa strategy is underway, similar initiatives were launched in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East.

During the last few months of 2012, ICANN has had several meetings with Middle East stakeholders regarding participation in ICANN as well as ICANN engagement in the region. Such meetings took place in various venues including the Arab IGF meeting (Kuwait, 9-11 October 2012), ICANN 45th meeting (Toronto, 14-19 October 2012), and the 7th IGF meeting (Baku, 6-9 November 2012). Feedback received during those meetings demonstrated need to put more effort to enhance engagement with the Middle East community. There was also support for the notion of engagement strategies, and willingness to take part in developing a strategy for the Middle East.

In December 2012, ICANN called for the creation of a working group to develop ICANN engagement strategy for the Middle East, and invited ICANN community and constituency members to join this effort. Twenty two people expressed interest in joining the working group. They come from eleven countries and represent a variety of stakeholders, including governments, private sector, civil society, technical community, and the academia. Annex 7.1 lists the members of the Middle East Strategy Working Group (MESWG), their affiliations, and countries they come from.

The working group's Terms of Reference have been to:

- Develop a three-year (2013-2016) regional engagement strategy for the Middle East that focuses on the needs and priorities of the region within the scope of ICANN's role;
- Identify specific strategic areas and accordingly the problems and challenges of each area and the corresponding recommendations and actions;
- Provide a preliminary plan of action including activities, timelines and priorities;
- Ensure a true multi-stakeholder approach in both the development of this strategy and its implementation;
- Work with ICANN on developing a one-year implementation plan.

2.2 Geographical Scope

The Middle East, as covered by ICANN’s Global Stakeholder Engagement, includes the following countries: United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen.

During the consultations that led to the creation of the working group, stakeholders from North Africa expressed interest to become part of this process, and noted that the strategy should address common issues across all Arab countries. Accordingly, the geographical scope of this strategy, shown in Figure 1, covers all 22 Arab countries as well as Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.



Figure 1 Middle East and Adjoining Countries

This group of countries falls within two different ICANN geographical regions (Africa and Asia Pacific), hence they are part of different regional structures such as APRALO and AFRALO for At-Large, and APTLD and AFTLD for country code top-level domains. They also fall within the scope of three Regional Internet Registries: RIPE NCC, AfriNIC and APNIC.

MESWG members noted that the geographical diversity of the Middle East region as defined in this context would represent a challenge not only in identifying a common ground to base this strategy on, but also in ensuring the ongoing and effective engagement from both ICANN and the community moving forward.

Furthermore, MESWG discussed the geographical term that would best describe the collection of countries catered by this strategy. There was a consensus that such a group of countries could be best described as “Middle East and Adjoining Countries”. However, for easier reference, the group agreed to continue to use the term “Middle East” throughout this document, with the understanding that it covers more countries.

2.3 The Region in Numbers

The current section summarizes statistics given in Table 3 in Section 7.3:

- The region's total population is 653,879,364; representing 9.32% of the world's population.
- The region's total Internet population is 178,283,126; representing 7.41% of the world's Internet population.
- Internet penetration in the region is 27.27%; world's Internet penetration is 34.3%.
- There are 16 root server instances in 9 different countries in the region.
- Total number of ccTLD domain names registered in the region is approximately 660,000 domains; more than half of this number is registered under one single ccTLD (.ir), and around 70% of it is registered under two ccTLDs, namely (.ir) and (.ae).
- Number of ccTLD registrations in the region is around 0.62% of the total number of ccTLD registration worldwide (currently around 105,000,000).
- Of the 25 countries in the region, 11 have IDN ccTLDs in the root.
- Total number of IDN ccTLD registrations is less than 10,000.
- Total number of new gTLD applications is 54; they come from 7 countries; 36 applications come from one country (UAE).
- Of the 54 new gTLD applications, 8 are IDN gTLDs.
- Number of new gTLD applications from the region is less than 0.03% of the total number of submitted applications (1,930).
- There are 6 ICANN accredited registrars in 5 different countries, out of 973 accredited registrars worldwide.
- 17 countries are represented in the GAC.
- 17 ccTLD operators are members of ccNSO.
- There are 11 At-large Structures in 8 different countries.
- There is one Board Director from the region.
- Only a few individuals from the region are participating actively in GNSO, ALAC, and SSAC.

The above summary demonstrates the following:

- Small number of ccTLD registrations; 1 domain name per 275 Internet users in the region versus 1 domain name per 23 Internet users worldwide.
- A relatively large number of IDN ccTLDs, yet the number of registrations under those IDN ccTLDs is very small.
- The number of new gTLD applications is not very indicative since there are about 30 applications from one applicant (radixregistry.com). On the other hand, the small number of ICANN accredited registrars reflects the lack of interest and/or awareness of the domain name business.
- Lack of participation in the different constituencies of ICANN; despite the relatively high number of GAC and ccNSO members from the region, only few attend regularly and even fewer participate actively in there.

3 Problem Definition and Challenges

Challenges and problems facing the region are categorized into three main groups in line with the three main strategic focus areas identified for this strategy and as described in the following section.

3.1 DNS Security and Stability

There is generally lack of interest in DNS operational matters in the region. Since the majority of ccTLD operators in the region run with very constrained resources, their spending in technical infrastructure and capacity building is very limited. Coordination and collaboration among the technical community in the Middle East is also a challenge. Participation of technical community in forums like NOGs or regional TLD organizations is weak, and discussions over mailing lists take place only occasionally. The notion of sharing best practices among technical operational bodies (ISPs, ccTLDs, CERTs etc.) is not a common practice in the region.

There is an evident need for building capacities, creating pools of trainers in the region from practitioners and academia, incubating relevant research and fostering regional and global collaborations. A key challenge here is the absence of any sustainable regional mechanism to coordinate these efforts.

Challenges are not purely technical. Many policy and legal aspects require awareness raising, training, and collaboration among key actors in the region, namely governments and law enforcement agencies.

3.2 Domain Name Industry

Stakeholders have come to acknowledge the lack of the domain name industry ecosystem in the region. Middle East investments in any domain name related business are negligible. This is clearly evident in the gTLD space both at the registry and registrar levels. It is also manifested in the number of domain names registered under ccTLDs in the region. While few ccTLD registries have, in the past few years, revamped their business and policy processes, the majority are still struggling with issues such as regulation, pricing, marketing, and policies.

The challenge here is multifold. There is obviously lack of awareness about this whole industry, in many aspects, including business, technical, policy and legal. There is also the fact that the majority of ccTLDs in the region are not playing their role in driving the sector forward. This could be due to many different reasons, but at the end, the result is the same; weak domain name industry and lack of an appropriate ecosystem thereof. One should also not look at the domain name sector in isolation from the overall Internet economy. Online businesses that offer localized services and content are very limited, and many of their offered services are hosted out of the region. This is further exacerbated by the absence of the enabling environment essential for stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship in Internet related businesses.

3.3 Internet Governance Ecosystem

ICANN is built around a multi-stakeholder governance model in which community-developed policies come through bottom-up, consensus based processes. Though the model is designed to be open and inclusive, yet there is limited participation by stakeholders from the region in ICANN. Governments in the Middle East are the main actors in Internet policy-

making processes at the national and regional levels. In many parts of the region, there is no well-defined process for non-government stakeholders to engage and take part in Internet governance related processes. The lack of engagement at national and regional levels reflects on participation not only in ICANN, but also in other global Internet policy fora.

On the other hand, ICANN's engagement in the region is quite limited, hence comes the lack of awareness among the different stakeholders on its role. Further, the inadequate regional outreach makes it hard for ICANN to build sustainable relationships and enhance trust in its stewardship.

4 Strategic Goals

The following strategic goals for ICANN's engagement strategy in the Middle East have been identified as follows::

- Foster two-way engagement between ICANN and the broader Internet community in the region;
- Build strong and competitive domain name industry in the region;
- Promote multi-stakeholder Internet governance mechanisms in the region.

5 Strategic Focus Areas

To achieve the goals identified, the strategy has been focused on three key areas as follows:

- DNS security and stability
- Domain name industry
- Internet governance ecosystem

These areas are discussed in more detail below.

5.1 DNS Security and Stability

From ICANN's perspective, Security and Stability of the naming and address allocation systems addresses three aspects¹:

- Operational matters (e.g., matters pertaining to the correct and reliable operation of the root name system)
- Administrative matters (e.g., matters pertaining to address allocation and Internet number assignment)
- Registration matters (e.g., matters pertaining to registry and registrar services such as WHOIS)

Therefore, a regional strategy from the perspective of Internet DNS Security and Stability of ICANN in the Middle East should focus on engaging the region to strengthen operational, administrative and registration matters. Deliberations within the working group have identified that this engagement should develop capacity, technology and awareness.

5.1.1 Stakeholders (Beneficiaries and Contributors)

In the context of Internet Security and Stability, stakeholders involved include at least the following:

- Registries
- Registrars
- Internet Service Providers (ISPs)
- System configuration managers
- Network operation and security managers, including Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)
- Internet Exchange Points (IXPs)
- Internet related research and academic organizations
- Internet policy related organizations (ICANN, ISOC, RIRs, Regional TLD Organizations)
- Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA), Governmental and Inter-Governmental organizations related to the Internet, Information Technology, Telecommunications and their security (such as ministries, regulatory bodies, and others)

¹ As per the charter of Security and Stability Advisory Committee of ICANN (<http://www.icann.org/en/groups/ssac>)

5.1.2 Current Status

As previously highlighted, the Middle East is currently served by multiple organizations for capacity development. Regional organizations include the operator groups SANOG, MENOG, AfNOG, regional TLD organizations including APTLD and AFTLD² and Regional Internet Registries, namely APNIC, AfriNIC and RIPE NCC. These organizations regularly hold training sessions, conferences and other activities in relevant areas, e.g. DNSSEC, IPv6 and other technical and operational matters.

However, as these organizations have a fairly large geographical mandate without specific focus on Middle East (except for more focused regional organizations like SANOG and MENOG), it is harder for stakeholders in the region to benefit from such activities on regular basis. Further, the region has common features that require these stakeholders to have a common “local” platform to address them. For example, the region (mostly) uses Arabic script and thus requires engagement that specifically addresses issues related to this script in operation, administration and registration of domain names. Developing a strategy that looks at the Middle East specifically will be very helpful in addressing such issues.

Apart from the organizations which are regionally focused, there are also specialized groups and discussion forums which are relevant generally in the context of the Internet and specifically for secure and stable development and operations of the DNS; e.g. DNS Operations Analysis and Research Center (OARC), DNS Security, Stability and Resilience (SSR) Symposium, etc. In addition, there are opportunities to engage on global platforms through online communities and meetings hosted by international organizations like ICANN, IETF, ISOC and others.

5.1.3 Objectives

The objective of ICANN’s engagement in the Middle East for DNS Security and Stability is to:

Develop relevant capacity, resources and Internet infrastructure in the region, in a coordinated, comprehensive and sustainable fashion, focused on addressing the needs of the region.

This can be divided into specific sub-objectives:

- 5.1.3.1 Build awareness and understanding of stakeholders, including policy makers, for the importance of security, stability, availability and resilience of the DNS and its benefits to economic growth and social prosperity.
- 5.1.3.2 Strengthen technical know-how and capacity of stakeholders through a comprehensive training program for relevant technologies and processes, especially those focused on secure, stable and resilient operations of the DNS as well as diagnosing and addressing its health.
- 5.1.3.3 Develop Internet infrastructure to strengthen security and stability of the DNS in the region.
- 5.1.3.4 Work with LEAs to cooperate in compliance with international best practice and due process for keeping the DNS secure and stable.

² Some countries in the region are also members of CENTR, which is the European TLD organization.

5.1.4 Recommendations

Though there are multiple activities that should be undertaken to address these objectives, discussions among members of the working group prioritize them as follows:

- 5.1.4.1 Undertake awareness activities on policy and coordination needs for addressing the security and stability of the DNS infrastructure for policy makers, LEAs and other stakeholders.
- 5.1.4.2 Undertake awareness activities on operational and coordination needs for addressing the security and stability of the DNS infrastructure for registries, registrars and other stakeholders.
- 5.1.4.3 Develop and strengthen DNS infrastructure and operations in the region including those for registries, registrars, and network service providers. This should include a broader set of stakeholders, including those related to operations, policy and law enforcement.
- 5.1.4.4 Collaborate to develop the requisite IDN infrastructure (IDN label generation rules; registration data conventions; IDN variants, etc.) for effective, stable and secure deployment of IDNs.
- 5.1.4.5 Provide technical assistance to LEAs and CERTs in understanding the DNS and ICANN policies for more effective cross border coordination to combat cybercrime particularly with the use of mutual legal assistance treaties (MLATs), existing conventions and best practices in coordination with the latter.

5.1.5 Actions

No.	Action	Relevant Recommendations	Timeline (Yr1/Yr 2/ Yr3)	Stakeholders
1	Conduct awareness training on challenges associated with DNS security and stability, and policy and practice to address these challenges	5.1.4.1 5.1.4.2	Yr1	Policy makers, LEAs, Local CERTs, Registries
2	Conduct awareness training on use of MLATs, conventions and best practices for more effective cross border coordination to combat cybercrime, as well as DNS emergency response	5.1.4.1	Yr1	Policy makers, LEAs, Local CERTs, Registries, ISPs, Network Operators
3	Identify and train on tools for assessing and reporting on the health of the DNS and to identify any potential threats to the system	5.1.4.3	Yr1	CERTs, Registries, Registrars, ISPs, Network Operators, Academic and Research Organizations
4	Identify and train to use the software, tools and processes to plan and manage DNS availability and resilience, and to address any threats to the DNS	5.1.4.3 5.1.4.4	Yr2	LEAs, CERTs, Registries, registrars, ISPs, Network Operators, Academic and Research Organizations
5	Plan and conduct contingency and coordination exercises to prepare for	5.1.4.3 5.1.4.4	Yr3	LEAs, CERTs, Registries

	threats to DNS and prepare CERTs			
6	Organize training and programs to adopt relevant technologies, including DNSSEC, RPKI and IPv6	5.1.4.3	Yr1	Registries, Registrars, ISPs, Academic and Research Organizations, Government and Regulatory Authorities
7	Adopt “train the trainer” model to develop local competencies that can sustain capacity building activities in the future. These should build capacity in academia and relevant R&D organizations to integrate the training into coursework for preparing new professionals, with collaboration of LEAs and CERTs	5.1.4.3	Yr1/Yr2	Academic and Research Organizations, LEAs, CERTs, ISPs
8	Promote secondary DNS hosting in the region, especially for IDN ccTLDs	5.1.4.3	Yr2	Registries
9	Increase number of root server instances in the region	5.1.4.3	Yr1	ISPs, IXPs
10	Coordinate and develop an IDN Label Generation Ruleset(LGR) to ensure stable and secure use of IDNs and Variants for Arabic script	Error! Reference source not found.	Yr1	Arabic Script Community, Academic and Research Organizations, Registries
11	Coordinate and participate in the registration data definition and validation efforts at ICANN and other organizations to contribute the requirements for Arabic script community	Error! Reference source not found.	Yr1	Registries, Registrars, Policy Makers, LEAs, CERTs
12	Identify challenges in using IDNs and variants (especially in the context of tools and applications to address the security and stability of the DNS), develop requirements to address these challenges and engage with technical community for the solutions	Error! Reference source not found.	Yr2	Registrars, Registries, Academic and Research Organizations, CERTs, LEAs

5.1.6 Metrics

- Number of awareness and training activities addressing DNS security and stability for policy makers and LEAs
- Number of awareness and training activities addressing DNS security and stability for technical community
- Number of trainers trained on DNS security and stability aspects

- Number of trainings conducted by previous trainees
- Number of secondary ccTLD hosting instances in the region
- Increased number of root server instances in the region
- Arabic script LGR for the root
- Report on Arabic script requirements/conventions for registration data
- Training and dissemination material related to security and stability challenges and recommendations in using Arabic script IDNs and publishing registration data

5.2 Domain Name Industry

Domain name registrations, participation of private sector from the region at ICANN as well as numbers and sustainability of current registries and registrars, all demonstrate the need for concerted efforts to develop this industry in the region. Domain name industry was therefore identified to be a strategic area of focus in ICANN strategy for the Middle East. The strategy would focus on highlighting opportunities, addressing challenges, facilitating information and experience sharing, in order to help develop the domain name industry and ensure active participation of private sector from the region.

5.2.1 Stakeholders (Beneficiaries and Contributors)

- ASCII ccTLD Registries
- IDN ccTLD Registries
- New gTLD applicants
- gTLD Registries
- Governments and regulators
- Research centers and academia
- Registrars
- Registrants
- Civil Society
- Business (ISPs, and others)
- Legal experts
- International and regional organizations

5.2.2 Current Status

The region enjoys a big population and has a huge potential Internet market. It has more than 178 million Internet users that sum up to 7.41% of the total number of Internet users worldwide. While Internet penetration is picking up in the region, with a current penetration of around 27%³, the case is not the same when it comes to the domain name industry. The region has around 660,000 domain name registrations under ccTLDs, both ASCII and IDNs combined, which sum up to only 0.62% of the total number of ccTLD registrations.

The region's 25 countries have a total of only 6 ICANN accredited registrars, 5 within the 22 Arab states (1 in Jordan, 1 in Kuwait, 1 in Morocco, and 2 in UAE), and one in Pakistan. It is obvious that private sector from the region does not see potential in the domain name industry; even with the launch of the new gTLD program. There is also lack of awareness on requirements to become a gTLD registry as well as requirements to become an ICANN accredited registrar.

There is also lack of dispute resolution policies and domain name appeal and arbitration mechanisms as means to resolve domain name disputes; mainly for terms and trademarks widely familiar within the region. Those are mostly needed for ASCII and IDN ccTLDs. As for gTLDs, ICANN and the Internet community have already instilled some mechanisms for current TLDs. ICANN has also set additional mechanisms as part of the new gTLDs program

³ It is worth noting that there is huge discrepancy, with countries of penetration as low as 5% and others of penetration as high as 86%.

such as the Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS) and Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH) mechanisms.

Finally, as previously mentioned, not all countries in the region are members of the same regional TLD organization. While some countries are members of APTLD, others – mainly in Africa – are members of AfTLD. Additionally, Palestine, Iran and Afghanistan are also members of CENTR; the European TLD organization.

5.2.3 Objectives

The objective of ICANN's engagement in the Middle East for Domain Name Industry is to build the domain name industry in the region and strengthen the overall ecosystem by achieving the following sub-objectives:

- 5.2.3.1 Raise awareness among local stakeholders including registries, registrars, registrants and policy makers, of the domain name industry and associated opportunities.
- 5.2.3.2 Foster collaboration among TLD operators in the region to exchange best practices and discuss issues of relevance that could further develop the industry in the region.
- 5.2.3.3 Stimulate innovation and entrepreneurships in the domain name industry and auxiliary industries in order to grow the overall Internet economy in the region.

5.2.4 Recommendations

- 5.2.4.1 Create awareness campaigns on the potential opportunities of the domain name industry highlighting its impact on the further promotion of online services as well as e-commerce in the region.
- 5.2.4.2 Create more awareness pertaining to the new gTLD program including financial support mechanisms, thus encouraging more applicants from the region in future rounds.
- 5.2.4.3 Facilitate best practice sharing among ccTLD registries, both ASCII and IDNs in areas such as policy development, marketing and promotion, technical infrastructure, emerging technologies such as IPv6 and DNSSEC.
- 5.2.4.4 Engage with the relevant business community in the region, aware them and encourage them to expand into business related to and including registries and accredited registrars.
- 5.2.4.5 Help develop regional expertise and know-how related to the different components of the domain name ecosystem such as policy-making, legal aspects and dispute resolution.

5.2.5 Actions

No.	Action	Relevant Recommendations	Timeline (Yr1/Yr2 / Yr3)	Stakeholders
1	ICANN to partner with regional stakeholders and to assist with funding to conduct road shows, workshops, seminars and training programs on Registry / Registrar model	5.2.4.2 5.2.4.3 5.2.4.4	Yr1	ASCII & IDN ccTLD Registries, gTLD Registries, Registrars
2	ICANN to partner with regional stakeholders and to assist with funding to conduct road shows, workshops, seminars and training programs on dispute resolution policies and WHOIS	5.2.4.5	Yr1/Yr2	ASCII & IDN ccTLD Registries, gTLD Registries, Registrars Registrants Legal experts
3	ICANN to partner with regional stakeholders and to assist with funding to conduct road shows, workshops, seminars and training programs on new gTLD program	5.2.4.2	Yr2/Yr3	gTLD Registries, new gTLD applicants, Registrars
4	ICANN to partner with regional stakeholders and to assist with funding to conduct road shows, workshops, seminars and training programs on best practices of ccTLD operations, ASCII and IDNs	5.2.4.3	Yr1	ASCII & IDN ccTLD Registries, Registrars
5	ICANN to partner with regional stakeholders and to assist with funding to conduct road shows, workshops, seminars and training programs on the impact of the domain name industry on further promotion of online services as well as e-commerce	5.2.4.1	Yr2	Registries, Registrars, Registrants, Business, Government, Regulators, Academia, civil society, Legal experts
6	Carry out a baseline survey and economic study identifying the potential of ASCII domain name and IDN industry for the region	5.2.4.2 5.2.4.3 5.2.4.4	Yr2	Registries, Registrars, Registrants, Business Government, Regulators
7	Establish strategic partnerships with governments and SME incubators in the region and study the possibility of financing initiatives in this field	5.2.4.2 5.2.4.3 5.2.4.4	Yr2	Registries, Registrars, Business Government, Regulators
8	Provide guidance and support to current ICANN accredited registrars	5.2.4.4	Yr1	Registrars

	from the region to address their sustainability issues			
9	Work on tackling financial, legal and technical challenges faced by new registrars passing through ICANN Accreditation process, in order to facilitate and speed up new accreditations from the region	5.2.4.4	Yr2/Yr3	Business

5.2.6 Metrics

- Increase in number of ASCII ccTLD registrations
- Increase in number of IDN ccTLD registrations
- Increase in number of Arabic script IDN ccTLDs
- Increase in number of registrations under new gTLDs from the region
- Increase in number of ccTLD registrars
- Increase in number of ICANN accredited registrars from the region
- Number of successful new gTLD applications from the region
- Number of registrants per capita, compared to other regions
- Number of domain names per online business (how many of those domains registered under ccTLDs and how many under gTLDs)

5.3 Internet Governance Ecosystem

The Middle East region has witnessed increased interest in Internet Governance issues by various stakeholders. The innate multi-stakeholder nature of the Internet space necessitates improved engagement in the Internet Governance ecosystem, whether in quantities, quality or variety, in order to ensure that the needs, priorities and specificities of the region are properly reflected in global policy making platforms. The role of ICANN in supporting, complementing and promoting Internet Governance processes, whether internal or external to ICANN, is highly important.

5.3.1 Stakeholders (Beneficiaries and Contributors)

In the context of the Internet Governance Ecosystem, the relevant stakeholders include at least the following:

- Civil society, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Internet users at large;
- Internet technical community and academia;
- Governments and regulators;
- Private sector and trade and industry associations;
- ISPs
- New gTLD applicants
- gTLD registries
- ccTLD registries
- Registrars
- Registrants
- Intergovernmental and regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Westerns Asia (UN-ESCWA), UN-ECA, the African Union, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
- International organizations whether technical or non-technical including but not limited to ISOC, IETF, RIRs, NOGs, the IGF Secretariat, Diplo Foundation and others

5.3.2 Current Status

The growth of the Internet in the Middle East region has been quite significant whereby an estimated 7.4% of all Internet users worldwide are from this region (2012). In light of the technical and geographic proliferation of the Internet, its governance emerged as a complex and controversial issue particularly due to the calls and general consensus to have a multi-stakeholder approach towards Internet Governance. As a result, a number of processes and structures have been developed and established to serve the formulation of public policy as well as the dialogue on Internet Governance. These currently form the Internet Governance ecosystem and include among others: ICANN constituencies, technical and standardization institutions such as the IETF, and regional and national IGFs.

The term Internet governance is a broad term used in many different contexts such as the coordination of technical standards, the operation of critical infrastructure, development, regulation, legislation, management, etc. The existence of the Internet Governance ecosystem led to increased interest by governments in the region to engage in international Internet public policy and governance settings on how to govern the Internet as a global resource as well as the roles various stakeholders in these countries can play.

Nevertheless, the representation and active participation of the Middle East region in these structures remain considerably limited when compared to other regions and countries as summarized below:

- 17 countries are represented in the GAC which currently has a total of 120 member countries;
- The following regional organizations are observers in the GAC: League of Arab States and Economic Commission of Africa;
- 17 ccTLD operators are members of ccNSO;
- Out of the 140 At-large structures globally, there are 11 At-large Structures in 8 different countries from the region;
- Participation of the region in the Global IGF started out quite limited in 2006 but has been improving in recent years noting that the 2009 IGF in Sharm El Sheikh witnessed the highest percentage of participation from the region;
- It was only in 2012 when a number of regional IGFs were launched including the Arab IGF, Africa IGF, and North Africa IGF.

5.3.3 Objectives

The objective of ICANN's engagement in the Middle East for Internet Governance Ecosystem is to promote engagement with and participation of relevant stakeholders in relevant for a by achieving the following sub-objectives:

- 5.3.3.1 Promote multi-stakeholder Internet governance mechanisms;
- 5.3.3.2 Foster healthier representation from the region in ICANN constituencies;
- 5.3.3.3 Increase and strengthen engagement and effective participation from the Internet community in the region in various constituencies of the Internet Governance ecosystem.

5.3.4 Recommendations

- 5.3.4.1 Strengthen ICANN representation in the region, foster relationships with regional and national stakeholders, and build trust in ICANN's stewardship.
- 5.3.4.2 Stimulate engagement in global and regional Internet related fora such as ICANN, ISOC, IETF, RIRs, NOGs, the global, regional and national IGFs including the Arab IGF.
- 5.3.4.3 Promote and support national and regional multi-stakeholder initiatives such as national and regional IGFs.
- 5.3.4.4 Improve ICANN outreach and raise awareness of ICANN in the region.

5.3.5 Actions

No.	Action	Relevant Recommendations	Timeline (Yr1/Yr2 / Yr3)	Stakeholders
1	Increase ICANN fellowship opportunities for the region	5.3.4.2 5.3.4.4	Yr1	Civil society, Governments, Private sector, Technical community, and Academia
2	Establish ICANN ambassador program in the region	5.3.4.1 5.3.4.4	Yr2	Civil society, Governments, Private sector, Technical community, and Academia, Regional organizations
3	Complement, liaise with and support existing Internet governance mechanisms such as the Arab IGF	5.3.4.2 5.3.4.3	Yr1 / Yr2	All
4	Develop and sponsor outreach programs and initiatives in partnership with national and regional stakeholders in order to stimulate interest and ensure effective participation in ICANN and Internet Governance fora	5.3.4.2 5.3.4.4	Yr1 / Yr2	All
5	Develop and sponsor capacity building programs to simulate models for a multi-stakeholder, bottom-up, consensus-driven policy development process	5.3.4.2	Yr1 / Yr2	All
6	Support the creation of remote hubs in the region for attending ICANN meetings	5.3.4.2 5.3.4.4	Y2	Civil society, Governments, Private sector, Technical community, and Academia, Regional organizations
7	Train the trainers and help develop training materials that may be integrated in academic curricula within the region	5.3.4.2 5.3.4.4	Y2	All

5.3.6 Metrics

- Increase in ICANN outreach to the region in terms of number of events and orientations/capacity building workshops held in the region
- The number and nature of stakeholder representation of organizations and/or individuals invited to participate in the events and orientation/capacity building

workshops held in the region

- The number and nature of stakeholder representation of speakers invited to participate in events in the region
- The number and nature of stakeholder representation of instructors invited to participate in orientation/capacity building workshops in the region
- The number of attendees and frequency of attendance at ICANN meetings from the region
- The number of individuals from the region being granted Fellowship Program support to attend ICANN meetings
- The number of new regional members joining ICANN SOs/ACs (including new regional ALSes) in addition to stakeholder groups and constituencies of the GNSO
- The number of individuals nominated to and selected by NomCom, or elected through their constituencies to become members of ICANN Board and SO/AC Councils.
- More effective participation from the region in terms of roles, responsibilities and contributions in joining working groups or leading certain activities.
- Number of comments received from the region through ICANN public comments process
- Increase in ICANN presence in the region in terms of staff, ambassadors and/or offices for outreach in the region
- Increase in participation from the region in other relevant fora such as ISOC, IETF, RIRs, NOGs as well as global, regional and national IGFs including the Arab IGF

6 Implementation Plan

MESWG will continue to work with ICANN on developing an implementation plan for the first year of this strategy as well as for defining the objectives and operational details and putting a regional mechanism into action, to follow up, institute, coordinate and sustain the implementation plan activities.

The first-year plan would include specific projects, serving the strategic goals, and addressing objectives, recommendations and actions of the three strategic focus areas. The plan would also include roles of different partners, as well as a timeline and KPIs to measure success metrics as described by the strategy.

To that end, MESWG has done an initial outreach effort to identify potential organizations that can contribute to the implementation of the strategy. In addition to ICANN the list of organizations includes:

1. AfriNIC
2. Al-Khwarizmi Institute of Computer Science, University of Engineering and Technology at Lahore, Pakistan
3. APNIC
4. Bahrain ISOC Chapter
5. Google
6. Internet Research Project, Pakistan
7. ISOC
8. Lebanon ISOC Chapter
9. Palestinian National Internet Naming Authority (PNINA)
10. RIPE NCC
11. Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQatar)
12. Talal Abu Ghazaleh Organization

It should be noted though that this is a preliminary list, and as projects and activities are being planned in the region, MESWG will continue its efforts in reaching out to potential partners to come on board and assist the implementation. In that respect, a sub-group will be created, focusing on outreach activities through identifying a list of potential partners and relevant regional and global venues.

MESWG plans to present the implementation plan at the ICANN 47th meeting in Durban (14-18 July 2013).

7 Annexes

7.1 MESWG Membership

Stakeholder Group	Name	Affiliation	Country
Private Sector	Charles Shaban	AGIP	Jordan
	Khaled Koubaa	Google	Tunisia
	Zahid Jamil	Jamil&Jamil	Pakistan
Technical Community and Academia	Alireza Saleh	IRNIC	Iran
	Fahd Batayneh	Internet Governance Expert	Jordan
	Marwan Radwan	PNINA	Palestine
	Moez Chakchouk	ATI	Tunisia
	Mohamed El-Bashir	ictQatar	Sudan
	Nabil Bukhalid	ISOC Chapter	Lebanon
	Sarmad Hussain	University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore	Pakistan
	Siavash Shahshahani	Sharif University of Technology	Iran
	Government	Abdulrahman Al-Marzouqi	TRA
Christine Arida		NTRA	Egypt
Iftikhar Shah		MoITT	Pakistan
Imad Hoballah		TRA	Lebanon
Manal Ismail		NTRA	Egypt
Mohammed Al-Noaimi		TRA	Bahrain
Qusai Al-Shatti		CAIT	Kuwait
Civil Society	Amr Elsadr	Tromso University, Norway	Egypt
	Ali Almeshal	ISOC Chapter	Bahrain
	Fouad Bajwa	Internet Research Project	Pakistan
	Rafik Dammak	University of Tokyo, Japan	Tunisia

Table 1: MESWG Members

Additional members were invited to join MESWG during the Arab MIG meeting in Dubai (4-5 March, 2013):

- Hania Sabbidin Dimassi, UN ESCWA
- Sofie Maddens, Internet Society

7.2 Methodology and Process

MESWG began its work in early January 2013 and held its meetings through telephone conferences scheduled mostly on weekly basis, in addition to one face-to-face meeting that took place in Dubai on 5-6 March.

In discussing the starting point regarding work to be undertaken by MESWG, a question was raised on whether a community survey would be essential to determine priority areas to be included in the strategy. MESWG members decided that such input would be more valuable after some preliminary work by the group. Accordingly, the group agreed to work towards the development of a draft document to be posted for community feedback, and to take the input received into consideration in finalizing the strategy.

The group made itself familiar with the ICANN Strategic Plan (2012-2015), and then began to reflect on the main elements of the Middle East strategy in terms of the strategic goals, strategic focus areas, objectives and activities underneath each area. In determining the strategic goals and focus areas, the group put together a number of questions addressing the following:

- Key challenges facing the region over the next 3 to 5 years in accomplishing its Internet related objectives;
- The region's unexploited capabilities or unemployed capacities;
- Actions to be considered accordingly at a regional level;
- Key challenges facing ICANN over the next 3 to 5 years in accomplishing its objectives in the region;
- ICANN's unexploited capabilities or unemployed capacities;
- Actions to be considered accordingly at ICANN's level.

Based on the working group's input on the above questions, consensus was reached on the strategic goals and strategic focus areas for ICANN engagement in the Middle East. MESWG members organized the discussion under each focus area into the following sub-sections:

- Stakeholders (Beneficiaries and Contributors)
- Current Status
- Objectives
- Recommendations
- Actions
- Metrics

In relation to the substance of the strategy, and while the working group was discussing the kind of activities and projects needed in the region to achieve the strategic goals as set forth in the strategy, questions were raised with regard to the execution phase, and whether the strategy should be restricted to activities and projects that fall clearly within ICANN's remit. There was a common understanding that any recommendations or actions included in the strategy should be within the scope of ICANN's mission and go in line with its strategic plan. The group also acknowledged that in implementing the strategy, ICANN would need to partner with other players from the region as well as from the international community.

7.3 Statistics

Table 2 below shows the total number of Internet users in the 22 Arab states, as well as Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Country	Internet Users ⁴
22 Arab States	105,633,160
Iran	42,000,000
Pakistan	29,128,970
Afghanistan	1,520,996
Total	178,283,126
Percentage	7.41%

Table 2: Internet Statistics in Selected Countries in the Middle East and Adjoining Countries

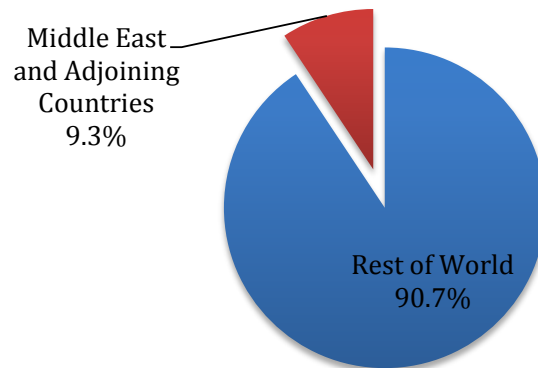


Figure 2: Total population in the Middle East as compared to the rest of the world (2012)
Source: Compiled from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>

⁴ Numbers as of June 30, 2012 from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

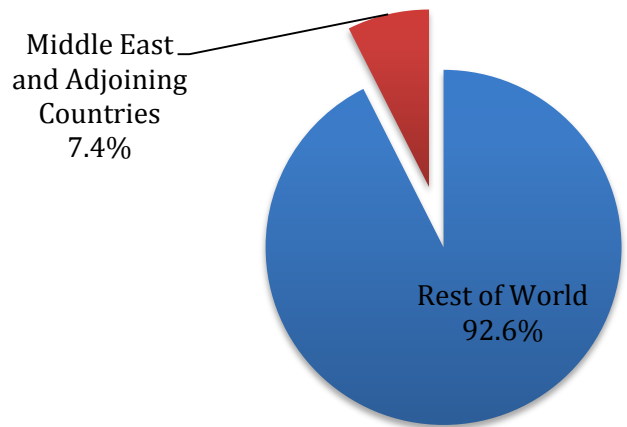


Figure 3:Percentage of Internet users in the Middle East out of Internet users worldwide (2012)
 Source: Compiled from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>

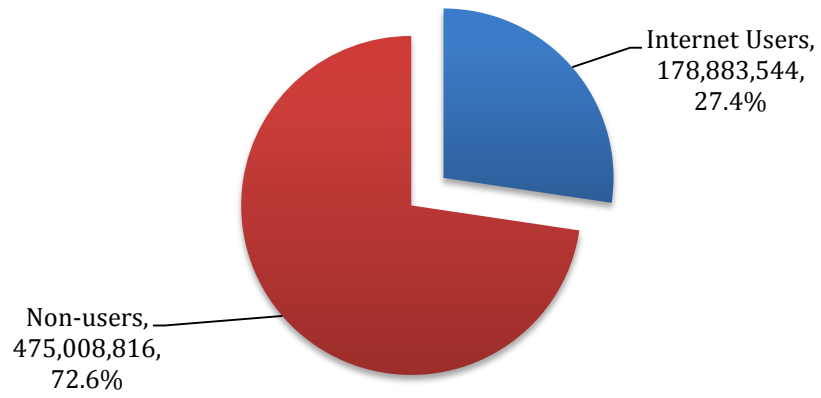


Figure 4:Internet users out of the total population in the Middle East (2012)
 Source: Compiled from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>

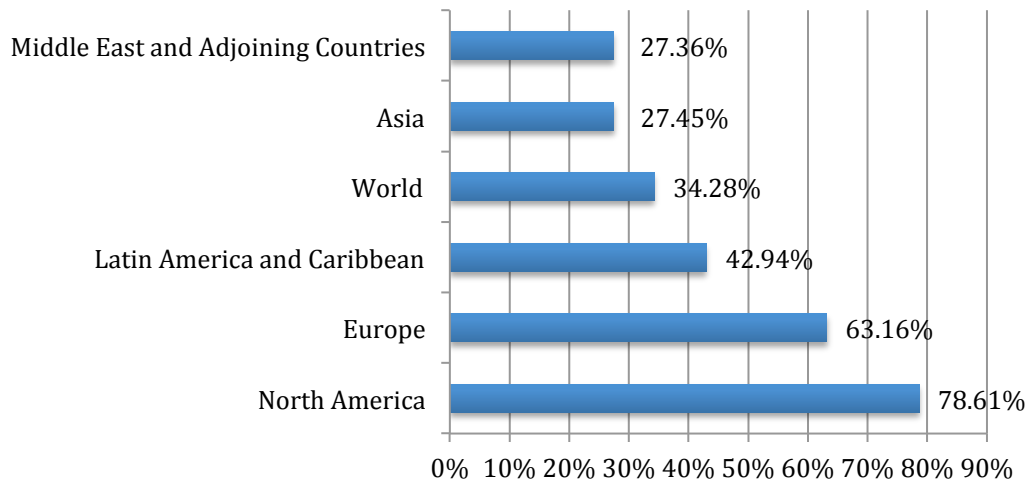


Figure 5: Internet Penetration - users out of total populations in world regions (2012)
Source: Compiled from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>

Country Code	ccTLD Registrations	IDN ccTLD Registrations	Root Server Instances	Accredited Registrars	New gTLD Applications	ICANN Board	GAC	ccNSO	GNSO ⁵	ASO	ALAC	APRALIO/ AFRALIO	At-Large Structures	SSAC
AE	102,150	2,020	2	2	36	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
AF	6,500	-	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
BH	2,000	-	2	0	3	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
DJ	?	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DZ	?	?	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
EG	8,900	3,000	3	0	2	1	1	1	5	0	0	0	1	0
IQ	500	-	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
IR	353,200	-	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
JO	4,400	120	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
KM	?	-	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
KW	?	-	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LB	3,550	-	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LY	13,600	-	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
MA	47,000	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	0
MR	900	-	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
OM	1,700	25	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
PK	?	-	2	1	0	0	1	0	6	0	0	1	2	1
PS	7,250	160	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
QA	16,000	600	2	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SA	29,900	2,900	2	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SD	3,000	-	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
SO	40,000	-	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SY	1,350	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TN	18,550	500	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	0
YE	6,500	-	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	660,450	8,425	16	6	54	1	17	17	15	0	1	1	11	1

Table 3: DNS Related Statistics and Engagement in ICANN

Regional organizations that are members of ICANN constituencies include:

- League of Arab States: Observer to the GAC
- Arab ISP Association (ARISPA): Member of the ISP Constituency of GNSO

⁵ One council member from Pakistan; the rest belong to the Non-Commercial User Constituency (NCUC).

7.4 Findings from Outreach Activities

7.4.1 Arab Multi-stakeholder Internet Governance Meeting

On March 4th 2013, members of MESWG presented at the Arab Multi-stakeholder Internet Governance meeting that took place as part of the Arab IGF Open Consultations. Purpose of the presentation was to inform Arab IGF participants of work underway with regard to ICANN's Middle East strategy. The presentation provided a summary of work carried out by the working group till then, and highlighted the main elements of the strategy. The session offered MESWG the opportunity to get direct feedback from participants. Feedback was generally positive. It praised the work of MESWG and offered some constructive remarks.

Summary of feedback:

- Localizing the multi-stakeholder model to suit the region is very important; it will help develop strong policy development processes at national and regional levels; it is an ongoing process that requires efforts by all stakeholders;
- Arab IGF can play a stimulating role in bringing everyone around the table; support from ICANN, ISOC and the RIRs will help the Arab IGF develop and reach out to the larger community;
- Capacity building is essential; organizations such as ISOC and Diplo Foundation play key role in this area;
- Such regional meetings help people understand the role of ICANN; not many people from the region go to ICANN meetings; continuity in participation is also a challenge;
- ICANN should expand its presence in the region; there is a need for more awareness and outreach activities at regional and country level to explain role of ICANN and how to get engaged; different stakeholders may require different outreach approach;
- Engaging private sector from the region in Internet governance processes, and in ICANN, is a challenge; ISPs and operators do not see their role in ICANN; there are very few registrars and domain name dispute resolution providers in the region;
- Need for enabling environments within countries to foster DNS industry; ccTLD operators can contribute to building this industry;
- Need for identifying local partners from the region; this would further extend the outreach and maintain long-term sustainability.

7.4.2 Registrars

Members of MESWG at the group's face-to-face meeting in Dubai, on March 5th– 6th, 2013, agreed to reach out to current registrars from the region. The outreach was meant to stand on the challenges registrars from the region faced during ICANN accreditation process as well as challenges they are currently facing in running their registrar business.

Despite the small number of registrars interviewed, only 3, they still represent 50% of the registrars in the region and hence constitute a significant sample. Feedback provided was very useful and is summarized below.

Summary of feedback:

- Competition in this business is very tough;
- The business requires large volumes to make it profitable;
- Selling domains cannot be the core business; it must be complemented with other services which are often more profitable (e.g. hosting, cloud, etc.);
- Becoming an ICANN accredited registrar is an investment; it is important and it gives credibility;
- Different views regarding the financial requirements for accreditation (commercial general liability of \$500,000 and working capital of \$70,000); some believe it used to be an issue in the past; others believe it still acts as a barrier for entry;
- Increase in registry fees is a burden for small registrars;
- In some countries, registrars like other businesses in the country, must pay up to 10% taxes on any bank transactions;
- Different payment methods to suit different customers;
- Different user interfaces with different languages;
- Registrars can either build their own platforms or use 3rd parties; it depends on the business model and the size of the business;
- Increasing the number of registrars should not be goal in itself; ICANN should engage more with existing registrars, help them sustain their businesses;
- Registrar accreditation rules must be the same across all regions;
- All agreements with ICANN and with registries are subject to the laws of the United States, which is not favorable for many businesses in the region;
- No major technical challenges; migration from RRP to EPP was an issue long time ago.