
DURBAN – ATRT 2 with RSSAC
Wednesday, July 17, 2013 – 00:00 to 00:00
ICANN – Durban, South Africa

BRIAN CUTE:

Good morning. Good morning. Are we recording? Okay. This is Brian Cute. This is ATRT 2 meeting with RSSAC. And all I can say is that's a long hallway. And why does C come after D? [Laughter] And my apologies for being a few minutes late.

Good morning and thank you for your time. This is part of ATRT 2's outreach to the community. Just to frame the discussion that we're going to have, in terms of our work phase we are still in data collection and listening mode.

We're going to be developing proposed recommendations and issuing them for public comment in mid-October. There will be an opportunity to comment on those proposed recommendations, but the inputs here will help us for our assessment, our report, and our recommendations. We welcome that input.

The questions that you have in front of you are basically of two types. One through six represent questions that have come top of mind to us at this point of our work. They're just questions, they're not preliminary conclusions or assumptions.

And the balance of the questions or questions that we developed having read public comment that we received to date. That's the nature of the questions. For today, please feel free to respond to any or all of the questions, but don't be constrained by them.

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

We're here to listen to whatever inputs you have that relate to the working of the Accountability Transparency Review Team, and understanding what you're respective backgrounds are, you're still long standing members of this community. So don't be constrained by your particular area of expertise either.

So with that framing, really the floor is yours, we're here to listen and have a bit of a dialogue. It's a large team.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

Okay. Thank you so much. I understand that you're recording and also casting over the networks so I'll introduce myself. My name is Lars-Johan Liman, I'm the newly elected – one of the newly elected co-chairs of the Root Service System Advisory Committee, RSSAC.

And with me here are also three other members of the new executive committee of the RSSAC. They are Elise Gerich, [Brad Bird 0:44:22] and Suzanne Woolf. And I'm very glad for their support. The Root Service System Advisory Committee has been around since the very first ICANN meeting, but it's been kind of – I wouldn't say hiding because that suggests an active thing, but it hasn't been very visible, and one of the reasons that the RSSAC has a very narrow focus on what it does, the scope is very narrow.

And the group of people who has constituted the RSSAC has been mainly technical experts, which do not usually follow the major part of the discussions in ICANN because they're very strictly focused on the root service system. And that means that the meetings of the RSSAC have traditionally been conducted during the ITF meetings, or in

conjunction with the ITF meetings instead because that's where these technical experts normally travel.

But over the long years that RSSAC has existed, there has been discussion but... I and another group of members have felt that this is not really working well. The process has been extremely slow, glacial of speed comes to mind, this term. And transparency has not been very good. We have not succeeded in having exchange of information and building relationships with the other organizations, sub-organizations within ICANN and/or outreach has been very limited.

So we eventually got to a state where we said that we need to re-start. This doesn't work. We need to reboot the entire system. And that's what we're doing right now. So a document that outlined the transition process has been written. We have submitted or requested changes to ICANN's by-laws regarding RSSAC and they have been passed.

And we have now elected a new steering group according to the new format, the new organization that we're trying to design. So we have an executive committee with members from the root server operators and from the root zone administration side, who now, right now, work to build the new RSSAC.

And it consists of this executive committee. It consists of a broader caucus around there, where we will invite members that we will work with to create work parties and try to have a more focused process which will help for it to be a little quicker than the current one which is extremely slow.

And in that process, we are also very much want to increase the transparency and visibility of RSSAC. One of the very first steps is that I am here. I have been meeting with various parties during my few days here, trying to build new relations and so on.

And we also, we're writing documents right now. We have two very rough draft documents, one covering the scope and the roles of the various parts of this new RSSAC that we're planning on. What's the role of the executive committee? What's the level of caucus? And what's the role of the wider community that we want to interact with?

And also the second document that will speed our internal processes. How shall we work with voting procedures, document preparation? All that stuff. But they are in very rough draft stages for the moment, so we're not quite ready to share them yet but we would like to do so soon.

So we are also in listening mode. We want to learn and kind of interact with other parts of ICANN and other organizations to see how do they work and which of these procedures and design parts can be relevant for us and may work in our environment. So right now, it's not cast in stone how it will work in the future, but we have a number of ideas.

We're looking a lot at SSAC because they seem to have working procedures and so on. Now SSAC and RSSAC are different things, they have very different scope and the different types of outreach, but still there seems to be a lot to learn from SSAC. So we're working closely with them.

Now that said, I will work through your questions and I... Many of them I don't really feel – don't really know what to respond because I've, as you note, I've been a member of the ICANN community but only in a very dark corner. So I've not been involved in policy development procedures and such things.

So I don't have much to contribute, but I'm not going to say that I don't care. But because I realize that if every sub-body of ICANN says, "I don't care about the others," we're not going to have the interaction that we need to produce good results. And that means that I want to reach out in the future, and I may have better things to say in a couple of years' time, but right now I don't have the experience that I would like to have to give input to you.

Please.

BRIAN CUTE:

Let me give you a prompt on things we've been hearing and things we've been thinking about. And they tie very much into your first points. And it's very interesting to hear... Because one of the questions are, are the working methodologies of your group fully accountable and transparent? If not, how could they be enhanced or improved?

So you're speaking directly to question 14 with your remarks. But one of the themes we're hearing is the need for better cross-community deliberation. Not just in terms of interactions and communication, but also that ties into PDP process. And there has been a fair amount of input to this group about the PDP process.

We're going to have an independent expert looking at the PDP process. Lots of input about GACs ability or difficulties in providing input to other constituencies as policy is being made. So this actually is a critical theme and in our recommendations we may be targeting enhancements to cross-community deliberations.

So in that aspect, what have you seen in terms of two things? When you have interacted with other constituencies and bodies in the past, how is the dynamic gone? And also, in terms of policy development processes, what dynamics have you observed in terms of RSSAC when it gets pulled into the process?

How it participates in that process? If you can speak to those two points that would be great.

SUZANNE WOOLF:

Thank you. You can go first or next, whatever. I'm having a little difficulty separating the questions, so I'll just sort of comment a little on it. As the long term liaison from RSSAC to the ICANN Board, and having had a lot of times at ICANN meetings and ICANN community contacts where I'm the only RSSAC representation, which means that the role of the Board liaison gets overloaded rather severely at times.

And one of the things that we have to work out is exactly what that role entails, and what – how do we distribute some of the responsibilities for engagement more widely. Because one of the observations I will say, I feel very strongly after all of the years of engagement here, it's very difficult for a small and narrowly focused group that has, we believe,

powerful input on a very specific set of topics but is relevant to a significant variety of what goes on in this community.

It's very hard to see exactly how to engage effectively. It can be very labor intensive, very time intensive, concerns of disclosure and conflicts of interest are absolutely appropriate. As a liaison to the Board I have seen these things up close and personnel.

And I understand where they come from and for the most part, I support them. But it does add overhead to have to take into consideration all of those aspects of participating in this community, all of the time, for a small group of people. In particular, it can be quite difficult to provide input...

But of our function as an advisory committee, I have always felt, is to provide input to policy development processes of other groups. And there are very... We're looking up close... Because we are in this position of recreating governance mechanisms, we've actually been looking fairly closely at how other groups in the community do that, how these functions are performed.

Whether it's through staff or through liaisons of various kinds, or cross-membership... And pretty much regardless of how you structure it, there is still significant overhead and significant work involved in getting up to speed on any specific issue from the point of view of another group to such an extent that you can really provide meaningful input to what's really a process they own.

I don't know how to improve that, as Liman has said, we're also in listening mode because we're looking for mechanisms that will be

effective for us. How to do liaisons, how to do operating procedures, how to manage membership. But I think the concern of the overhead of participation is very real for us.

BRIAN CUTE: Thank you for that. Questions from the ATRT? [OPEN MIC 0:15:38 – 0:15:50]

SUZANNE WOOLF: I think we might have... We might have Barbara [Resmond 0:15:54] on the phone also for ICANN staff support, so I'm not sure whether she would want to comment or you want her to, but I believe she is also out there.

BRIAN CUTE: Thank you. Let me try to tease out part of the question I asked too. Policy development process, how effective that is depends on a number of things. And there has been comment with respect to how PDP can take quite some time, how there is a challenge in terms of cross-community deliberation, how issues – and this is what I would like to focus on. How issues can arise sometimes into the process and then extend a process when perhaps they should have been identified earlier.

Do you have any observations from a RSSAC perspective about whether you've observed that or not? If so, what your thoughts are on that.

SUZANNE WOOLF:

Sure. I can certainly echo the concern. Again, from the perspective not only of RSSAC, but as closely involved with the workings of the Board, there is a vicious cycle we've got going where the Board is sort of the policy arbiter of last resort, but the Board wouldn't need to do that if in fact some of the cross-discussion and some of the support for each other's concerns came up earlier through the process.

It's better than it used to be in my very general opinion, but we still have challenges. I think SSAC actually tries very hard to do a good job, there are several liaisons... I'm also a SSAC member, so I get to compare these mechanisms and so on. I think SSAC does a very good job of trying to keep track where issues are arising, and try and weigh in early.

But that takes a significant membership sizing and a significant amount of staff support to do an even remotely credible job. And there is still a lot of choosing that has to be done, not only what issues to take up but where in the various policy and advisory processes to get involved.

Even with a remit that's pretty well understood, SSAC has a pretty strong internal culture. A pretty strong understanding of what we think our mission is, it's still very difficult to figure out exactly where to engage and how to be most effective.

BRIAN CUTE:

Avri.

AVRI DORIA:

Avri Doria speaking. I guess I do have a question because, while in my mind I kind of always thought that I knew what RSSAC did, when you've

talked several times about our mission, our strong mission and outfits. All of the sudden I find that I'm drawing a blank in terms of really understanding what your mission is.

So when you ask, how do we fit in? I'm going well, the root server has got to work and there is security, and every once in a while GAC asks a question that needs to be answered by you all, but....

SUZANNE WOOLF:

Okay. Let me first of all correct... I misspoke a little bit and I have to apologize for that, not enough coffee yet this morning. Because what I was say, what I was comparing was what we're trying to build with RSAAC is to what SSAC has, which is a pretty strong sense of where SSAC should get involved and how it should get engaged.

And it's still difficult was kind of the point. So from the perspective of trying to build structures for RSAAC, I'd like that, I would want us to recreate something like that as much as possible, but it's not clear how because the overhead is quite significant in terms of staff resources and in terms of the time and energy of the participants.

With regards to RSSAC, we actually did recently go through an exercise of getting a new charter, so we do have a pretty clear sense. I would like to think as sort of the initial membership as we grapple with the fact that we need wider involvement, and we need wider participation, and we need to define that.

Who to invite, and how to get work done, and how to make sure we get closure on our work items which has historically been a major problem. But the sense is that RSSAC is here to provide advice. As a Board

charted committee, the Board is the first on the list of constituencies, but by no means only.

The Board, to ICANN, to the broader community... And I'm realizing that I should really point out that this is just my opinion, and I hope my colleagues will try then because we haven't consulted about this [laughs]. But our mission is to... In addition to being a pool of DNSSEC expertise, which there are others in the community, we try to provide a very specific perspective having to do with infrastructure.

And because we work with the administrative authority over the root zone, there is an additional set of perspectives we can provide. And I'm realizing that I'm drawing a total blank on the new charter and the by-laws, but it's basically, you can look at the RSSAC page on the ICANN website has the by-laws excerpted.

And we're basically here to provide a fairly specific perspective to ICANN, to the Board, to the community on issues specific to DNS infrastructure and the administration of the root zone as it relates to the operational concerns of making sure the DNS works.

I realize that's not very articulate and I apologize for that. It is a little early and it's a little... It's a little early today and it's a little late in the meeting, so if one of my colleagues wants to add something I sure hope they'll help me out here [laughs].

ELISE GERICH:

Hi. This is Elise Gerich speaking as the IANA functions operator on RSSAC, which is also an ICANN role. But anyway, I wanted to mention,

Suzanne pointed out the operational aspect and I think that is a difference between the RSSAC and other advisory committees.

The core of the RSSAC is, has membership primarily from organizations that operate the infrastructure of the internet. And their role is to give advice that will impact, I think, the operational aspects of managing root services. And so that does make them somewhat different than say SSAC, which has a very strong skillset that are related to the security and stability and draws from a broader pool of potential experts than the RSSAC, which really draws from primarily operational folks for the core membership.

But my colleagues at the table, and since there are only four of us, may disagree. But I know Brad is an operational seat, and Suzanne is an operational seat, and Lars-Johan is also in an operational seat.

SUZANNE WOOLF:

It is probably why at this point to note one of the aspects of being an advisory committee not an SO, where it's our purpose to generate advice that people will regard as well founded and will want to take. But we're not in a position to issue binding advice.

And we've discovered actually that that is not always clear within the community, as one of the key differences between ACs and other bodies. That ACs really, really work hard to make actionable advice, that people will see it to their benefit in taking, but we don't get to...

We don't have the... We don't end up making binding recommendations or policies.

People have to think of going to us.

AVRI DORIA:

We didn't even think that we had questions for you. It comes one step even before that, we didn't realize that there were questions we should have been asking.

SUZANNE WOOLF:

And there is a certain set of issues that only... And this is where it gets interesting that the Board as the policy body of last resort sort of points out a dysfunction in the whole underlying system, because... And I realize that that's a strong phrase and I realize that I'm on the record saying that, but I do believe it.

That it's actually quite difficult to characterize what engagement will look like that caught these things early, so instead what you end up with is things feeling like they're being raised late and a scramble to come up with well-defined questions and relationships that can support getting them answered.

BRIAN CUTE:

Let me ask... Lars please.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

Lars Liman again. I want to stress that this is, we're exactly looking for opportunities to get into the process at an earlier stage. I see that as one of our main focuses, and by being more visible and more approachable, we hope to create a notion of root service exists.

Here is the body where issues relating to root service can be discussed, where questions can be asked, where input can be given. But since the RSSAC hasn't been very visible so far, I can well understand that no one thinks of contacting us and also it falls back on ourselves just as much, because we haven't been reaching out.

We haven't been seeking, looking carefully for issues that we need to deal with or where we feel that we want to engage.

BRIAN CUTE:

Thank you. Let me come back to the transparency. The working methodologies of the group and the transparency of that. And I'm just very pleased that this engagement will spur on what I'm sure is a very dynamic discussion about your charter next time you guys get together.

We talked to SSAC, we ask this question to everybody. One of the issues that came up in SSAC was that out of necessity because of the nature of the things they discuss, often they have to operate behind closed doors, and offline if you will. ATRT 2, our default position is that all of our operations are open, all of our activities are open unless there is a clear specific need and we have a chat [about this rule 0:28:42] available to us to go into private session.

But default open. A clear understanding that when it comes to security issues, there is a need sometimes to be in a private setting. That being said, we had that discussion with SSAC, we heard some interesting input from SSAC about a consideration on their part to be more open as well. Do you also have specific issues like SSAC that require you to be in private settings?

Is there a way, when you don't have those issues, you can be more open? Or you can go as is? Thanks.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

I definitely share your view here. The default setting should be open. I come from a society, Swedish society where open is actually very important. And my wife who happens to work for a government agency, she is well familiar with the situation there. A citizen, actually any Swedish citizen, can call any government agency, "I want to see that document, please give me a copy."

And she has to drop what she is working with because that's a priority thing. Unless the document is specified as secret or something like that. All documents are official and public and you can just call them and say, "I want to see it." Journalist, citizen, anyone. I like that. I want to be as public as that if I can.

Now I can foresee that we may run into some issues that will need to be handled in a more careful way. But right now, I don't see that we have that for the moment at least, but I'm not willing to give a full carte blanche for the entire future saying that everything will be open.

In the past, we have been rather bad at publishing. It's not because we want to be secretive, but because we haven't had working procedures for doing it. We have finally now managed to publish minutes from the two meetings we've had since we voted, that was a bit of a struggle.

Actually not on our part, but because there were no existing procedures to update web pages and stuff. It has taken a while. But they are there now and we hope that it will be soother in the future. And we have

decided to publish not only minutes that state the decisions that are taken, but also reflect the discussion that's been going on.

That's a way to be extra open about what is going on. I'm not quite clear on how the meetings are going to be ICANN... And please bear in mind that this is not cast in stone, this is not discussed to an endpoint yet, this is my personal view that we're going to probably have meetings that are close to the group, because maybe we want to discuss things to find a resting point where we can make a statement.

But I definitely also want to have the input and relationship with the broader community, so I would kind of say maybe we have two types of meetings, and closed meetings are not a good thing. So if you want to have a closed meeting there has to be a reason for it.

So I would actually prefer meetings to be more open than we have now. But, as I said, we're in the developing process to try to find a good way. And I will guess that our first attempt will not be the best one. We will have to redefine that as we go along because that's the human nature.

We try to make something, we find that it's not perfect, we improve on it, and it's a step-by-step procedure. And it's definitely an attempt to be as open as possible.

BRIAN CUTE:

So is it fair to say that in terms of all the aspects of your work, where you've been closed, it's not by charter it has just been by practice and habit? And that you're now addressing not just perhaps a different posture but formalizing that?

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

Yeah, you are quite right. I will even say that it is malpractice and mal-habit [laughter]. But yes, we're definitely trying to put structure into that and to make it more open and visible. And it's also somewhat depending on actually individual persons and their personalities.

I want to try to be outgoing. But some of the people don't have that nature so it's... I hope to create...

SUZANNE WOLFF:

I'm sorry to interrupt, but... There is... There has been discussion of initial membership and how much to do, more or less temporarily or as chair discretion, while we are setting up formal operating procedures. And there is a couple of things that we're doing and a couple of things we're arguing about doing.

That where we have a real tension between being as open as possible now about some things that are still in progress that are really not cooked yet. Things like draft operating procedures. And there is... We're not used to grappling directly, as my colleague says, we're probably not going to get it right the first time because we haven't had to grapple before with, all right, yeah, this isn't cooked yet but it's going to worry people if we don't tell them where we are even though where we are is going to be misunderstood in a different set of ways.

And you just have to sort of resign yourself that there is sort of a rough and tumble there, and not everybody is used to that. So it's frankly defaulting to that is taking a certain amount of mental agility [laughs].

BRIAN CUTE:

Let me ask a question going back to the PDP process and when issues arise. It is occurring to me, and this is just a concept that is forming, that there may be ways to improve against that negative dynamic. If at the outset, if at the chartering of the process where a recommendation is made by the GNSO or any other body, that at that stage of the game is where you should have the clearest issue of identification and understanding what constituencies, what advisory committees, work are going to be required in the process.

That seems pretty obvious to me. As opposed to RSSAC members who are under resourced and just doing their thing, trying to figure out looking at the mass of consultations that are ongoing, “Hey where should we be plugging ourselves in?” It just doesn’t make sense.

Do you think there might be some utility in putting focus on the initiation stage and maybe recommending some mechanisms? Be they expert groups or other input mechanisms, so that the issue identification happens fully and clearly on the onset to avoid this dynamic of six months any somebody goes, “Hey, you know this might be a root issue and let us get that [jimmed 0:37:02] up now.”

SUZANNE WOLFF:

Yeah. There might be a technical issue underlying this.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

I think it’s a good idea, but I think it’s a bit wishful thinking because, in my experience, that’s not really how the human brain works. Even if you have a large group of people that want to do that, it is not till you cannot work with the issue, thought of a problem, discuss it with other

people that you eventually realize that, oh we have a problem here down the line.

One example from the technical side is the development of secure DNS, where we had it all done in the year 2000. People started using DNS, we cannot administer it. It's secure, but there is no way we can handle the administrative load dealing with this, we have to redesign. And that's how you discover problems as you work along.

So it's desirable to do it the way you say, but I think it is in the human nature that we're not mentally able to find all of the problems and issues from the outset. So we have to discover them as we go along in the process. Now that said, there can probably definitely be improvement.

And I would like to reach out to the other boarders within ICANN who do policy development and brief them, and inform them, and kind of educate them that these are issues that you should be looking for. When you start to get near these areas, you're starting to get close to operations and would you please then talk more to us and we will try to help keep an eye open when you get near our turf, so that we can build a bridge, so that we can communicate.

So we can inform you, you can inform us and we can try to meet and make things work. But it will require more participation from RSSAC in ICANN, but also hopefully a more... That the other organizations are open to our input and to our wish to bring stuff to their table.

BRIAN CUTE:

Thank you for that. David.

DAVID:

First as someone who has been perhaps a bit on the more critical side of the RSSAC in my past history, I have to commend the efforts that RSSAC is undertaken to advisor structure. I think it's pretty amazing work. I'm glad that it is occurring at this point.

I actually... My question is I guess related more to the logistics of the efforts that you're undertaking. And I suspect that you won't be able to answer, but actually may be – Mister Oliver there in the back may be able to provide some input. A lot of the things that you're going to be undertaking, the efforts that you have indicated that you wish to move forward on, are going to require sort of non-trivial resources in terms of probably staff support, and presumably some level of travel support, that sort of stuff.

Have you – not you personally, but RSSAC, have you gotten to a point where you've done sort of preliminary analysis of what the resource requirements will be? And if you have, has that been passed up to ICANN in an open way? Basically has there been the budgeting exercise done for RSSAC?

DAVID OLIVE:

If I may, David Olive, vice president of policy development and support. It falls to our team to provide the support as we do for the SSAC and the other advisory committees as well as the SOs and ACs, to provide subject matter expert and secretariat support, and indeed, participation of the members as they need for travel to ICANN meetings.

We do of course have, and we're anticipating these changes working with the groups that are here, and trying to anticipating the budget to

have additional staff. We have two people, Bob [Roseman 0:41:28] as subject matter expert assisted by Carlos Reyes of our policy team.

We will also provide some administrative support. And we are also thinking within the FY 14 budget possible travel support as well, depending on where they wanted to meet. We're working with them because sometimes they meet at ITF meetings and sometimes...

We're trying to encourage them to also meet at ICANN meetings so there is the incentive to provide some travel support to some members. So that has all been part of the restructuring process. And we're encouraging that and we're collaborating with the chairs, and the members, and the Board members along the way.

SUZANNE WOLFF:

I think we have to say to that that we're not quite to the point of doing that analysis because there is some really basic groundwork to be done before that having to do with where do work items come to us from... And how do we structure our work. And for instance, we're looking at things like, how big does RSSAC really need to be in order to do quality work in a timely way with appropriate transparency and still have procedures that support actually getting closure and getting work completed and published for instance, which has historically been a problem for us.

That back and forth between structure and resources and doing the meaningful work, there is a lot of back and forth there. I mean, I've observed this process as part of the ICANN world and as part of the Board for a very long time. And I'm surprised at how intricate it gets.

And the fact is, we have to try to keep it as simple as possible because we really do want to get around to doing substantive work [laughs]. And we can be lost in process hell indefinitely, which may be another concern frankly with regards to the question of the efficiency of the policy process and so on.

How much structure and process do you need for credibility and to enable doing real work?

BRIAN CUTE:

Anything else from ATRT 2 members or RSSAC? No? Okay. Thanks very much for the inputs, very helpful. I think that gives you a flavor of our thinking, or some of our thinking. Again, you'll see draft proposed final recommendations on a report mid-October.

If you wanted to provide any feedback on these questions it's welcome at any time, you can send it by email or Wiki. And if you wanted anything to be factored into that document in October, I would say get it in by mid-September at the latest and then we can have time to assess it.

And then after that, it will be open for public comment, please feel free. We'll be coming back to the community in Buenos Aries for final touch and then we have to provide our final report by December 31st. So that's our timeline. But really appreciate the interaction. Thank you.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

And I will say thank you from our side for having us and of course, our doors are open if you have more question, if you request more input. Just come back to us. Thanks.

End of Audio