

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.