

# 1 Proposal for Multi-Year Planning of At-Large RALO Face 2 to Face meetings

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## 4 1. Executive Summary

5 The At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) is charged with integrating users and user organizations world-  
6 wide into the ICANN ecosystem. To help in this endeavour, the ALAC conducts significant on-boarding  
7 and training, but as a key component, representatives of At-Large Structures (ALSes) are periodically  
8 brought together, generally at ICANN meetings. These gatherings take on two forms: General  
9 Assemblies where representatives of ALSes from within a single region attend an ICANN meeting held  
10 within that region; and At-Large Summits, where representatives from ALSes from all regions are  
11 brought together at an ICANN meeting. The pattern that has evolved over the past years is that At-Large  
12 Summits have occurred at five-year intervals, and in the intervening years, each region has a General  
13 Assembly (GA). There have been two Summits, one in 2009 in Mexico City, and one in 2014 in London.  
14 Five GAs (1 per region) were held in 2010-2013, and one GA has been held since London.

15 Although the funding process has evolved as has general ICANN budgeting, the GAs have been funded  
16 through the Community Special Budget Request Process, and the Summits through special requests to  
17 the Board Finance Committee.

18 The pattern of GAs and Summits is now well established and there is a general understanding and  
19 acceptance of their benefits. **The ALAC is proposing that ICANN integrate these meetings into its  
20 normal planning and budgeting processes and do so in such a way as to allow these meetings to be  
21 scheduled and planned over multiple years, much as ICANN meetings themselves are planned ahead  
22 of time.**

## 23 2. Background

24 The ALAC currently receives travel funding to ICANN meetings for 27 people, the 15 ALAC Members, 2  
25 leaders per Regional At-Large Organization (RALO) and the ALAC Liaisons to the GNSO and ccNSO. At-  
26 Large attendance at ICANN meetings is generally limited to those participants who are explicitly funded,  
27 with occasional other participants who are part of a particular funded work group, review team or the  
28 ICANN Fellowship. Unlike other parts of ICANN where many SO or AC members attend based on funding  
29 from their employers who are either part of the domain name industry, do business with the industry,  
30 are involved in national or regional government or are involved in civil society organisations which focus  
31 professionally on Internet Governance, virtually all At-Large participants participate in ICANN purely on a  
32 volunteer basis, have no professional connection to the domain industry or Internet Governance, and  
33 have no access to funding at a level which would support ICANN attendance.

34 The ALAC came into being in 2003 as the Interim ALAC (10 ALAC Members selected by the Board, and 5  
35 by the NomCom). ALSes and RALOs were just a concept. From 2003-2008 the Interim ALAC, supported

36 by regional ICANN staff, identified local groups within each region to form At-Large Structures (ALSes).  
37 Representatives of these new ALSes were funded to meet together to create the rules for their  
38 prospective ALSes and ultimately to sign Memorandums of Understanding with ICANN (2006-2008).

39 As new ALSes joined At-Large, it quickly became apparent that without having been to an ICANN  
40 meeting, having met with their peers, or having contact with ICANN staff (who had ceased recruiting  
41 efforts once the RALOs were formed), these new groups and their representatives would have a nearly  
42 unsurmountable problem being integrated into the At-Large Community and becoming productive  
43 participants. ALAC, RALOs and Staff on-boarding and capacity building programs address part of the  
44 problem, but there is still a need to “touch and feel” ICANN in order to become effective. The fact that  
45 the native and often only language of many ALS members is not English significantly exacerbates the  
46 problem (in part addressed by extensive interpretation and translation services).

47 By 2009, there were approximately 100 ALSes, and funding was requested and received to bring one  
48 representative from each ALS together for a “Summit” to be held during the ICANN 34 meeting in  
49 Mexico City. This meeting was seen as a turning point in building an effective At-Large Community, with  
50 the ALAC, RALOs and ALSes all working towards a common goal.

51 As promising as this Summit was, however, it was intuitively obvious that we would not have the  
52 volunteer, staff or financial resources to repeat it very soon. The ALAC, together with RALO leaders and  
53 ICANN Staff developed a plan under which a Summit would be held every five years, and in the  
54 intervening four years, one General Assembly (GA) per region would be scheduled, bringing together  
55 one representative from each ALS in that region, preferably at an ICANN meeting held within that  
56 region. In conjunction with a GA, the concept of a “Showcase”<sup>1</sup> was developed to publicly highlight the  
57 achievements of the RALO and its ALSes.

58 Such General Assemblies require far less resources (even factoring in five of them) than a Summit. Travel  
59 costs are solely within a region. Since the number of attendees is much smaller than for a Summit, the  
60 planning required is far reduced and volunteers local to the region and city where the meeting is to be  
61 held can handle most of the arrangements and even fundraising (for special meals, showcase  
62 entertainment, etc.). This diverts no resources from the ALAC itself or volunteers from other regions.  
63 These meetings are however, seen as essential to discuss key policy issues within the region, develop  
64 strategies for the future acquaint new representatives with ICANN, and reinvigorate those who had  
65 previously attended. Staff resources are needed for both General Assemblies and Summits. However,  
66 there is an exponentially higher level required for a Summit.

67 The intent was that we would take one year off after the Summit, and then schedule the five regional  
68 GAs over the next three fiscal years (perhaps 1 GA in one year, and 2 in each of the other two years).  
69 This pattern reduces the draw on ICANN funds in the year after a Summit, and allows time for Summit  
70 action items to be implemented. Although we met the overall target in FY10-FY13, in practice, flexibility  
71 is and will be required due to the regional rotation of ICANN meetings, funding available in any given  
72 year and region- and venue-specific issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Showcases have proven so popular that we now often hold one even when there is not a GA or Summit.

73 A second Summit - ATLAS II (for AT-Large Summit) was held during ICANN 50 in June 2014 in London. An  
74 ATLAS II Declaration was prepared during a series of face to face plenaries and workshops and  
75 presented to the ICANN Board. The At-Large Community is currently finalizing the [implementation of](#)  
76 [these recommendations](#), through an [Implementation Taskforce](#) . The Summit was, according to its  
77 participants, others within the ICANN community, and many ICANN leaders, judged to be an outstanding  
78 success.

### 79 **3. Importance of Face to Face Meetings**

80 At-Large is a very heterogeneous community which represents an extremely geographically, culturally,  
81 and socially diverse set of organisations. All of these organisations have one thing in common - they  
82 have a very strong Internet end-user component in their mission, aims and governance. The diversity is  
83 certainly a strength given the At-Large mandate to represent the interests of all users world-wide, but it  
84 has been extremely challenging to keep the At-Large Structures focused on At-Large and ICANN  
85 activities over a number of years without regular face to face meetings.

86 There are many reasons for this difficulty, some obvious, some less so. Face to Face (F2F) meetings  
87 address many of the problems.

- 88 • 100% volunteer body - Volunteers come and go in the structures that make up At-Large,  
89 depending on their personal time availability and priorities. Volunteering is a very cyclic activity;
- 90 • No commercial interest in domain names, the number of At-Large volunteers whose work life  
91 involves domain names and related ICANN issues is very small;
- 92 • A geographically very diverse membership:
  - 93 ○ Conference calls are bound to clash with working day or middle of the night for some;
  - 94 ○ Technology in some parts of the world makes remote participation very challenging and  
95 sometimes very expensive, and indeed seriously hinders the opportunity for  
96 involvement. This is not only true for technologically complex tools such as Adobe  
97 Connect, but for simple voice communications as well;
  - 98 ○ Language issues – The majority of At-Large members have a mother tongue other than  
99 English and the majority of ALS members do not speak any English.
  - 100 ○ Cultural issues – Some regions of the world have a cultural need to meet face to face  
101 and see the people they work with in order to build a working relationship. Other  
102 regions have a culture where it is incorrect to express oneself with force. The diversity  
103 of cultures appears to be exacerbated in remote participation, with potential for conflict  
104 being heightened.
- 105 • Sustained knowledge and skills gap - Although the ALAC has done extensive work in organising  
106 capacity building webinars, the arrival of a significant number of new ALSes (over 50 new ALSes  
107 in the last four years) and natural cycle of ALS representative replacement, means that there is a  
108 sustained need for more capacity building and raising of awareness of ICANN policy issues.  
109 Much of ICANN’s work takes place at an ICANN meeting and it is well understood that it is nearly  
110 impossible to work out ICANN’s complex ecosystem without actually attending an ICANN  
111 meeting. General Assemblies and Summits have proven a vital component in sustaining a  
112 reasonable level of interest and involvement.

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- Opportunity for networking - The incentive offering for volunteers in the At-Large Community might be considered as quite limited for people who have no commercial interest in domain names. The ability for participants to network with other like-minded individuals from their region and across the world has been a key component need of this community;
  - The combination of exposure to the workings of ICANN coupled with the networking has allowed these meetings to be major source of the new dedicated volunteers who support our day to day work.

## 120 4. Need for Multi-Year Planning

121 Although the process has varied over the years as the ICANN budgeting process has evolved, the At-  
122 Large GAs have been funded through annual special budget requests and Summits through ad hoc  
123 requests addressed to the ICANN Board Finance Committee.

124 This has given rise to several problems:

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- No predictability for the ALAC, the RALOs or ICANN Staff. Effective F2F meetings require concerted planning of several months for a GA and up to a year for a Summit. The yearly budget cycle makes this very difficult. Imagine how difficult it would be to organize the first ICANN meeting of the fiscal year if we didn't know IF there would be a meeting until the budget was approved;
  - No predictability for the ICANN Finance and the ICANN Board - The budget for a RALO GA has ranged from \$35K-\$100K depending on RALO size and conference venue. The budget of an At-Large Summit has been in the order of \$700K, which required that it be handled by extraordinary budget requests since the normal special requests could not accommodate it. Although the individual numbers vary highly, the total envelope for a 5-year cycle is more predictable.
  - Although the issue will no doubt be reviewed in the forthcoming At-Large Review, the ALAC is comfortable with the 5 year cycle for GAs and Summit meetings. It balances an achievable workload, ALS involvement target with fiscal responsibility. But it is a relatively long cycle from the point of view of volunteer, staff and Board turn-over. We are continually faced with explaining the entire pattern, its history, benefits and requirements over and over again.
  - With the limited budget planning cycle and the uncertainty of success until very close to event dates makes it difficult to plan and to set volunteer expectations. The recent occurrences of last-minute meeting venue changes to a different region exacerbate the problem. (Not that such moves are easy on anyone!)
  - Volunteer and Staff time – Requesting General Assemblies and Summits has taken countless volunteer time as well as that of staff. Establishing a multi-year budget for these meetings would allow more time to be focused on policy development and community support.

148 It is therefore clear that coordination needs to be increased for the RALOs and the ALAC but also with  
149 ICANN Finance and the Board. Without such multi-year planning, difficulties will continue. In the past,  
150 requests to consider such multi-year planning have been simply rejected. The ALAC is pleased that is no  
151 longer the case.

152 Multi-year planning will result in:

- 153 • More financial predictability for ICANN at all levels;
- 154 • Better ability for the ALAC and RALOs to plan events ahead of time with the added benefit of  
155 starting detailed financial planning for an event as soon as venues are announced.
- 156 • More efficient use of resources - ICANN keeps on doing things at the last minute and paying  
157 through the nose for it. An advance plan for General Assemblies and Summits will allow for the  
158 meetings Team to forecast resource requirements when scouting for venues especially in the  
159 format of A, B and C meeting types;
- 160 • A more prepared community - A General Assembly or a Summit requires extensive preparation  
161 with the community so as to take full advantage of face time. An advance plan will allow for the  
162 preparation to not be linked to the budget process. For example, a GA or Summit could take  
163 place in a Meeting type C in October or November, only 4 or 5 months after budget adoption,  
164 but its preparation could start up to a year earlier. Better preparation equals better use of  
165 available resources and a more active community;
- 166 • More efficiency throughout the process - Budget preparation for a GA or ATLAS is time  
167 consuming both for volunteers and staff. Volunteers are more likely to participate constructively  
168 in the process of building a budget if they know their efforts will be utilised.
- 169 • Better volunteer moral and cooperation - Currently we have regions vying against other regions  
170 to make sure they get their GA. And the impact of requesting funding for a GA and then having it  
171 rejected during the special budget process, perhaps several years in a row, is very demoralizing  
172 for our volunteers.

## 173 5. Proposal

174 The five year cycle of General Assemblies and Summits has proven to be a reasonable balance of  
175 volunteer and staff effort, costs, and benefits. We therefore recommend that we continue with a  
176 Summit scheduled every five years, and a cycle of RALO General Assemblies in the four year interval  
177 between Summits. Ideally this should be spread between the years, as follows:

- 178 • Year 1: 1 year with no General Assembly post-ATLAS
- 179 • Years 2-4: 1 or 2 General Assemblies per year, 5 in total, with a preference for nothing late in  
180 year 4 in preparation for the Summit
- 181 • Year 5: At-Large Summit

182 This pattern reduces the draw on ICANN funds in the year after a Summit, and allows time for Summit  
183 action items to be implemented. Although we met the overall target in FY10-FY13, in practice, flexibility  
184 is and will be required due to the regional rotation of ICANN meetings, funding that is available in any  
185 given year and regional issues and region- and venue-specific issues.

186 The timeline on page 7 shows the history since the first summit and is the general pattern that the ALAC  
187 is recommending continue going forward.

## 188 **Conclusion and Next Steps**

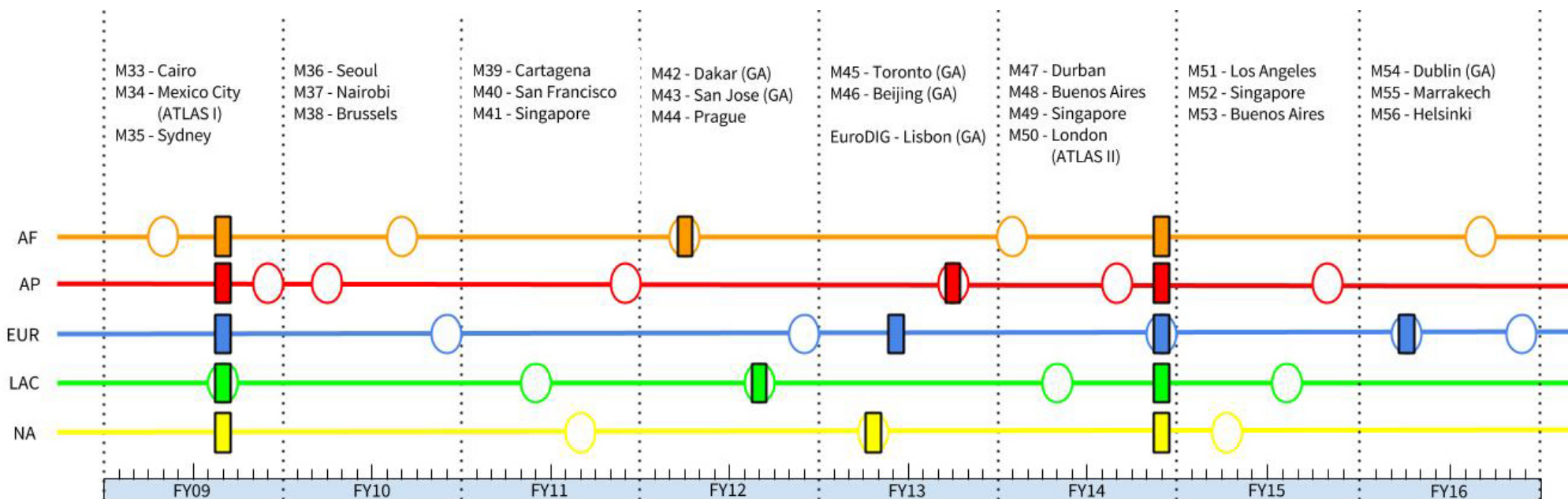
189 Until now, the ALAC, collaborating with its Regional At-Large Organisations, has filed annual Community  
190 Special Budget Requests in order to fund the organisation of RALO General Assemblies and made  
191 exceptional Requests for the first and second At-Large Summits. However, this process needs to be  
192 aligned with ICANN’s strategic and operational planning processes and no longer rely on ad hoc planning  
193 and budgeting.

194 The Chair of the Board Steve Crocker, ICANN’s outgoing President and CEO Fadi Chehadé, and other  
195 ICANN leaders have gone on record saying that the Summits need to be part of ICANN’s regular meeting  
196 schedule. Our proposal builds on that support, and continues the practice of the far less resource-  
197 intensive General Assemblies.

198 A multi-year schedule rotating General Assemblies and a Summit satisfies the need of At-Large for a  
199 predictable way to actively involve its ALSes in ICANN activities, while providing more planning and  
200 transparency incumbent on a maturing ICANN. It sets medium and long term community goals whilst  
201 ensuring fairness across all regions and sets good accounting practice to enhance efficiency across  
202 ICANN. It also allows for a stricter regime of budget management which will include performance  
203 measurements that can tie in with the mainstream ICANN key performance indicators, a significant  
204 improvement over the ad-hoc system that has been used thus far.

205 If this proposal is accepted by ICANN, the ALAC and ALAC Staff are prepared to work with other ICANN  
206 staff to integrate it into the ICANN operational plan and budget.

## Historical At-Large General Assembly and Summit Timeline



- ICANN meeting - colour coded to indicate region
- indicates when a GA/Summit took place - colour coded by RALO

## Annexes

### **Annex A: Presentation of ATLAS II Program**

This Annex contains a copy of the ATLAS II presentation proposal, as used to obtain sponsorship. It provides a full presentation of what an At-Large Summit is. Annex A can be found at [provide URL here].

### **Annex B: Table of Historical and Projected GA/Summit Details**

This table is a comprehensive table of RALO General Assemblies and At-Large Summits, starting with the Summit in 2009 and projecting possible GAs and Summits through to 2020. It provides actual financial details for past meetings, and best estimates of funding required for future meetings. The table, a living document which will change over time, can be found at:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11e1U8ZzOoqwUVG->

[VSVw4COj5MxD13tWi15gnMTYlc/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11e1U8ZzOoqwUVG-VSVw4COj5MxD13tWi15gnMTYlc/edit?usp=sharing). Worksheet two of the table provides a legend describing the columns and data in detail.