

Civil Society Engagement Strategy Working Session, Marrakech (10 March 2016)
Adam Peake, ICANN staff, notes (see meeting transcript and MP3 recording for complete record <https://meetings.icann.org/en/marrakech55/schedule/thu-civil-society-strategy>)

The meeting addressed three main issues; the scope and definition of civil society appropriate to ICANN; further development of the catalogue contents; sharing information about upcoming events and how to coordinate participation. There was a brief update on communications tools.

1. How best to define civil society, the scope of the communities engaged as civil society, and is civil society an appropriate term within ICANN?

Definitions suggested included the World Bank's <http://tinyurl.com/2s7ues>, and how the Internet Governance Forum and World Summit on the Information Society gave us the now common stakeholder groupings of government, business, technical and civil society, with academia either alongside technical community typically conducting technical research, or part of civil society. The definition and scope should be appropriate to ICANN's mission, not defined by any other process or venue.

The ICANN environment must be welcoming and inclusive for new members, mentorship was mentioned, and the need to simplify the complex organisation and complex issues.

While the ultimate goal of the strategy was suggested as increasing the numbers fully participating in ICANN policy development, awareness raising so that ICANN is better understood by global civil society is the first goal.

Knowledge of Internet governance and ICANN issues in many developing countries is low, awareness raising and capacity development should be a significant focus of the strategy. Generally, need to express why ICANN is relevant to what civil society deals with everyday.

Jan Aart Scholte invited to respond on the discussion about definition and scope: Do not to equate civil society with NGOs; NGOs are just one component, civil society is essentially associations of citizens, it includes social movements, informal groups, associations of citizens primarily acting in the public interest and with not-for-profit/non-commercial activity and intent.

Business associations are often included in civil society, but as these are already represented in ICANN the focus should be on those acting in non-commercial interests.

Technical and business people are not necessarily excluded from civil society, however when they are civil society technical people are not doing technical work and business people are not doing business. A definition we might consider is that you are civil society when you're involved in public interest work, in advocacy involved in enhancing human livelihoods in general that is non-commercial and not-for-profit.

Civil society is an important vehicle to broaden ICANN accountability, it responds to the public interest and concepts of human livelihood.

Externally, when communicating with the broader public the term "civil society" will have more meaning than the internal terminology of NCUC, ALAC etc., which will only tend to confuse the uninitiated. It is a useful term for outreach.

Closing comment was this leads us to the definition similar to that in the current plan, a broad understanding that civil society is about non-commercial and not for-profit groups, academics and end-users. Particularly externally this is a useful definition.

2. Cataloguing content and new information

The catalogue is intended primarily for newcomers. Produced by the civil society groups in ICANN, it includes introductory materials about the groups themselves, and materials they have produced on substantive policy issues. It does not include contributions to ICANN policy development processes, internal reviews, etc.

Staff question: how best to present this information, advice on any missing materials, and information not currently available but necessary?

Missing: introductory materials about each of the constituent groups including how to join. What are the groups current work areas, break these out so people can see what civil society in ICANN is currently working on. And over time this naturally becomes an archive.

Categorization by theme would be helpful. A summary of each document as appropriate may be useful, or a summary or executive summary of each thematic section.

A number of comments that newcomers are often overwhelmed. A landing page for newcomers which introduces issues, explains jargon and acronyms, explains what the different groups do and how to participate in them, and then how to dive deeper into different subject areas would be helpful. Breaking issues into bite size pieces would speak more directly to a person's interests. Translate materials, otherwise simplify them. Help people understand where work is taking place.

A number of participants from the core group volunteered to help with these tasks.

3. Events calendar. When staff and community attend an event, a report should be linked to the calendar. The community through the core group should help to keep the events list up to date. Important that people know when and where there are events close to them, know how to participate, and how to hold an event for their community.

4. Subscribe to the civil society announcements and information mailing list
<https://mm.icann.org/mailman/listinfo/cs-info>

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