

Minutes of Meeting

MEAC-SWG Call 4 – Wednesday 13 July 2016

The fourth call for MEAC-SWG took place on Wednesday 13 July 2016 at 10.00 – 11.00 UTC. The call had 21 members and observers of the MEAC-SWG, and 2 ICANN staff members.

On the Call we had Walid Al-Saqaf (Chair), Hamza Ben Mehrez (Vice Chair), Adeel Sadiq, Ahlam Abu-Jadallah, Ahmed Bakhat Masood, Chokri Ben Romdhane, Dhouha Ben Youssef, Farzaneh Badii, Hanna Kreitem, Hadia El Miniawi, Hosein Badran, Houda Belkasim, Manal Ismail, James Quirck, Mona Alachkar, Nadira Alaraj, Rafik Dammak, Salam Yamout, Wajdi Garali, Ziad Bouziri, and Zahr Bou-Ghanem. And from ICANN Staff, we had Milena Timurcuoglu and Fahd Batayneh.

The agenda for the call included

- 1) Where on the timeline are we and what lies ahead;
- 2) ICANN's perspective and lessons learned from MESWG;
- 3) Members' perspective and lessons learned from MESWG;
- 4) Update and discussion on the MESWG Evaluation Committee; and
- 5) AoB.

NOTE: We did face a couple of technical difficulties with the Adobe Connect room, and so the call started slightly behind schedule. And due to these technical difficulties, we were unable to audio-record the call.

Where on the timeline are we and what lies ahead

The Chair shared the timeline of the WGs progress with regards to the strategy, which was as follows:

Timeframe	Tasks
6-17 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Introductions [✓]* Setting the wiki page and mailing list [✓]* Electing a Chair and Vice Chair [✓]* First group call [✓]
18-30 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Define work modalities [✓]* Conclude Timeline of the work in-hand [✓]* Agree on the frequency of calls [✓]* Sharing information on the 2013-2016 ME Strategy [✓]* Define an initial template of the strategy document [✓]
1 July – 30 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Review and Asses the 2013-2016 ME Strategy; i.e. what worked, and what needs to be refined* Use the ICANN 2016-2020 Strategic Plan as a key basis* Work on the first draft strategy document

1-14 October	* Issue the draft strategy for community feedback
15 – 28 October	* Discuss community feedback received with the MEACSWG * Incorporate relevant feedback in the strategy document
29 October – 4 November	* Finalize the strategy document

As the timeline indicates, the group is moving as scheduled. The group is currently working on two tracks; mainly:

- Review and Assess the 2013-2016 ME Strategy; i.e. what worked, and what needs to be refined; and
- Use the ICANN 2016-2020 Strategic Plan as a key basis.

ICANN's perspective and lessons learned from MESWG

ICANN staff spoke about the key outcomes of the Middle East Strategy, and this included:

- **Task Force on Arabic Script IDNs** – The group consists of more than 35 members with expertise in many languages that use the Arabic Script (Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, African Languages, Pashto, Punjabi...). The group is always seeking experts in more languages, and the window for joining is always open. The group was the first to conclude its work on LGRs at the TLD level for the Arabic Script. The group is currently undertaking two parallel tracks; namely LGR at the Domain Name Level, and Universal Acceptance in the context of Arabic Script IDNs. The group has held 4 F2F meetings so far all of which have been supported by ICANN.
- **Middle East DNS Forum** – An annual forum that kick-started in Dubai in 2014. Subsequent forums took place in 2015 in Amman, Jordan, and in 2016 in Tunisia. The forum has attracted a combined total of 300 attendees, and has been a good venue for new faces to join ICANN's PDP and be more interested in the DNS industry. The annual forum has been co-organized by both ICANN and ISOC since its inception in 2014.
- **Middle East and Adjoining Countries School on Internet Governance (MEAC-SIG)** – An annual 5-day workshop that attracts around 30 participants from around the region and 7-10 faculty members from around the globe. The school took place for the first time in Kuwait in 2014, and then it went to Tunisia in 2015. In 2016, the school is heading to Beirut, Lebanon in August. The school has been successful in onboarding new faces to ICANN and IG related fora.
- **The DNS Entrepreneurship Center (DNS-EC)** – Based in Egypt in a joint agreement between ICANN and the *Egyptian National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA)* since June 2014, the DNS-EC has a mandate to strengthen the under-utilized DNS industry in both the Middle East and Africa. The center is currently offering workshops under technical, business, and legal tracks. The center is envisioned to become a standalone entity with ICANN providing it with support as a partner. The center is also seeking partners to inject funds and expertise into it. More on the center can be found online at <http://dns-ec.eg/>.
- **DNS Market Study** – The study was undertaken by the EURid consortium, and was released in its final version in February 2016. The study shows the state-of-play of the DNS industry in the MEAC region. A copy of the study can be downloaded from <https://www.icann.org/news/announcement-2016-02-26-en>.

- ICANN Staff have been organizing **webinars** that are tailored to regional needs and on bi-monthly basis. Regional stakeholders have been encouraged to host **remote hubs** for key events such as ICANN meetings and IGF meetings. There has been stronger **Communications and Media** presence with ICANN appointing a dedicated director to serve the EMEA region since June 2014. There has been a lot of demand for **DNS technical workshops**; mainly DNS Operations and DNSSEC. The deployment of **L-root Instances** and **DNSSEC** are two other things ICANN Staff kept/keep pushing for, in addition to **joining the various SO'ACs** and applying for various programs such as the ICANN Fellowship Program, NextGen, IETF, IGF, and other events.
- There has been more dedication for stakeholder-specific engagement such as **Business Engagement, Civil Society Engagement, and LEA Engagement**.

The ME Strategy did touch upon other items, yet they were not fulfilled for various reasons. This includes:

- **Workshops on TLD Best Practices and Registry Operations** – There was no demand from the region
- **Trainings related to IPv6** - RIRs are already working on such workshops
- Collection of some metrics and KPIs
 - Increase in number of ASCII ccTLD and IDN ccTLD registrations
 - Increase in number of ccTLD registrars
 - ...

Was the increase in numbers caused by the ME Strategy, or by other factors, or combined?
- **Promote secondary DNS hosting in the region** - Not much will to do so

ICANN staff finally shared some ideas as food for thought, and this included:

- Metrics and KPIs must be carefully defined such that they are measurable;
- Delve into engaging with Civil Society, Businesses, and SMEs;
- How to re-activate current stakeholders from the region to be more involved in IG related for a; and
- Engagement with countries that are facing challenging situations for local communities to get engaged, or need special attention.

ICANN staff did stress upon the challenges faced in finding partners and hosts to host events, and at the same time the difficulties surrounding the scarce financial resources available. They also stressed on the point that in many of the events (such as ME DNS Forum or MEAC-SIG), ICANN ensures bringing onboard relevant I* organizations and partners, and markets such events as a joint effort and not as an ICANN standalone event.

Members' perspective and lessons learned from MESWG

In addition to having two members from the previous strategy (and currently serving on the new MEAC-SWG) attending the call (*Manal Ismail* and *Rafik Dammak*), we also had Mr. *Nabil Bukhalid* on the call in his capacity as past member of the ME Strategy.

Overall, the 3 members were satisfied with what was accomplished as part of the previous strategy, and acknowledged the amount of efforts ICANN injected into it. They did stress some key points, though:

- The need to split between “strategy development” and “strategy execution”;
- The scarce financial resources in executing the many findings of the strategy;
- The need for more ICANN staff to serve the region;
- The need to work with other I* Organizations operating in the region and come up with a unified Internet strategy for the region.

Update and discussion on the MESWG Evaluation Committee

The Chair did thank those who have contributed so far to the 2 documents, yet has asked other to share their feedback and thoughts.

With regards to Track 1, the chair of the working group Walid Al-Saqaf, who leads this track, thanked Fahd and members of the former MESWG; Nabil, Manal and Rafik, for their perspectives which could be very useful in the process of updating the Google document.

He also suggested that the first draft of the strategy document should focus more on quality and breadth rather than quantity and excessive details.

Additionally, he noted that while the former strategy document is important in forming the bulk of the new document, there should be emphasis on fresh perspectives and new ideas given the rapid pace with which the DNS sector and the Internet at large are developing in the region and the world.

Finally, he called upon members to be more engaged and active because the task at hand requires working as a group to produce useful contributions and eventually come up with a quality document by the deadline as per the approved timeline.

Update and discussion on the 2016-2020 ICANN Strategic Plan

On the other hand, the Vice-chair *Hamza Ben Mehrez*, who also leads on track 2, mentioned that track 2 should rely on the local community input and based on Studying the ICANN 2016-2020 Strategic Plan and using it as a key basis by identifying aspects to include in the strategy document. *Farzaneh Badii* asked if there were any example of the development of track 2 previously in ICANN MEAC-SWG working group strategy. She then Indicated what points needs to incorporate and emphasize with her input on track 2 (Evolve and further globalize ICANN) She approached the document from a CS perspective) and background in the Non-Commercial users. She asked which strategy can enhance CS as well other civil society group’s alleged strategy. One of the recommendations was to populate the document in a non-technical way to make easy to read and easy to understand. Track 2 should be relevant to our region and to our through contributing with ICANN through our more transparency and accountability.

Other Business

There was no other business.