

**Statement of the Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group on the
Independent Review of the ICANN Security and Stability Advisory
Committee (SSAC) Assessment Report¹**

The Non-Commercial Stakeholders Group (NCSG) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the second independent review of the ICANN Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC) that was published for community input on 21 June 2018.

The NCSG has carefully reviewed this report, and we wish to express our gratitude to all those who have contributed towards improving the quality of the SSAC's work, as well as adhering to ICANN's bylaw-mandated accountability measures and principles of diversity. We view the SSAC as a crucial element of the ICANN ecosystem, and highly value its input and advice. We second the general observations of the report at hand and share the positive feedback on the SSAC activities.

Methodology

While the authors provide a comprehensive description of their methodology and the NCSG has a good understanding of the intrinsic challenges specific to the ICANN community, we feel that the report could be improved by ensuring a thorough and reliable representation among survey respondents and/or providing more information on their background and competence. The SSAC is a very specific, technical committee within the versatile ICANN environment, largely composed of non-technical policy making professionals, lobbyists, and businesses. Little information is provided on the selection criteria of those invited for individual interviews and their relatively low number (42) impacts the credibility of the results. The same can be said for the online surveys, particularly since many of them were only partially completed. We have little to no knowledge on the level of ICANN involvement and awareness of SSAC procedures and performance represented by the respondents. To substantiate this concern with a direct example let us take a look at a very general question on SSAC recruiting operations (p. 37, Fig. 29, "How effective, or ineffective, do you believe the SSAC's recruiting operations are?") with 13 of the total 49 respondents admitting to being "unsure"/"not knowing" and another 13 giving it a "neutral" rating. This implies that 26 out of the 49 respondents (53%) don't really have sufficient knowledge to assess the work of the SSAC.

¹ <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/ssac2-review-report-21jun18-en.pdf>

In addition, the fact that the respondents' base is predominantly male and North American (with Europe taking 2nd place) leaves much room for speculation as to the actual representativeness of its results. This poses diversity and inclusiveness issues that we are addressing below.

Diversity

We fully realize the factual and historical challenges of the DNS environment, particularly when it comes to equal representation of genders and regions. The DNS' origins significantly impact the composition of the security and stability community within ICANN and beyond. While we are fully aware of these challenges, we feel they might be better attended to and/or emphasized in the report. We view the gender and regional challenge as one of crucial ones for the SSAC and encourage the report drafters to reflect this concern more strongly in the final result of their work.

The ICANN community strives to have a balanced representation of genders and regions in its activities, and the NCSG places this concern at the very top of our priorities. In all of our activities, no matter how specialized, we ensure balanced representation in our work. We appreciate that this balance may be perceived as being challenging to reflect in the SSAC, however we believe the word "successful" in the finding in the Executive Summary section of the assessment report that says "*the SSAC is successful in providing high quality advice on a broad variety of relevant security, stability, and resiliency (SSR) issues*" should only be used when advice as used in this context reflects broader view in terms of geographical and gender inclusive.

SSAC Size and Membership

The NCSG appreciates that the SSAC is composed of experts with specific skill sets that enable the SSAC to fulfil its responsibilities and that even though there is no hard limit on membership size, the current size of about 40 members seems appropriate. With this in mind, we believe non-leadership member term limits would contribute to improving diversity in the SSAC by giving experts from other regions and gender a chance to volunteer in the organization once a current member's term ends. We note that SSAC membership has in the past 13 years only grown from below 20 to roughly 40 members; this is further proof that without term limits, there is no way of offsetting the current regional imbalance as found by the reviewer. The NCSG therefore recommends that non-leadership member term limits should continue to apply, contrary to the reviewer's findings.

Transparency and Accountability

We affirm that the role of the SSAC in the ICANN environment is of a sensitive nature but also believe that there is a need for some degree of transparency. We welcome the

transparency-enhancing procedures deployed thus far and encourage the SSAC to seek further avenues for more community input and involvement.

Finally, it seems clear from the reviewer's findings that the SSAC does not have a problem with identifying or declaring conflicts of interest, but rather it needs a robust process in place that responds to identified conflicts of interest. The ICANN Conflicts and Interest Policy adopted on May 6th 2012 addresses such issues. Therefore, we recommend that the SSAC strictly adheres to this Policy.