

# NARALO Chair Reports on Travel Assistance 2013

## I. This is an opportunity for At-Large members to discuss and document travel sponsorship related issues.(Note: Items have been carried over from 2012)

The goal of this is to quickly resolve any issues that arise from ICANN-sponsored travel and to prevent such issues from occurring in the future. The At-Large community understands that coordinating travel for hundreds of people for international meetings is complex and stressful. Our desire is to assist in streamlining the process with feedback and suggestions. Additionally, sharing experiences within the community may help others to avoid travel related problems. This is now a regular sub-section of the new standing section of the Chair's report for addressing ICANN functions.

## II. General Concerns and Issues from Previous Meetings

A. Staff has been helpful and cooperative in resolving various issues from the Toronto meeting. It was noted that there were a number of delays and irregularities not specific to the At-Large constituency which are being addressed.

B. Per Diem Transfer Fees: There have been some questions about wire transfer fees and who is responsible. ICANN has paid the wire transfer fees for constituency Per Diems, but the community member bank may charge an additional fee which ICANN would not be aware of. If you have been charged a wire transfer fee for a Per Diem please forward it to At-Large staff so it can be analyzed, and advise the chair so it can be tracked as well.

C. Shuttles for Spill-over hotels: There was an issue at the Toronto meeting concerning cab-fare for community members traveling from non-venue hotels. Previous ICANN meetings had sponsored shuttle buses from hotels which were even within walking distance but there were no shuttle buses in Toronto. Staff has indicated that this is often organized in an ad-hoc fashion. Going forward the Chair will request specifics on shuttle buses prior to each ICANN meeting so the community is aware of the situation. Additionally, Travel staff responded to this question by stating that At-Large had received Per Diems and this should have been used for cab-fare. This is not the correct response or the most economical solution. A better plan would be to arrange for a once-per-day shuttle van service for At-Large representatives who are expected to be present at 7AM capacity building sessions (in cases where there is no ICANN shuttle bus). At-Large community members will collaborate on this issue but our assumption from previous meetings was that there would be shuttle buses. As a community we are very concerned about creating "classes" within At-Large, to avoid this we are working to ensure that everyone is treated equitably.

## III. Details for the Beijing Meeting

A. Visa Requirements: The visa application is indeed complex and staff has provided extensive documentation, however there are some issues. The following is the Chair's personal experience as a U.S. citizen:

1. The phone numbers and email addresses provided for the U.S.-China consulate are incorrect. The address [WEBMASTER@CHINA-EMBASSY.ORG](mailto:WEBMASTER@CHINA-EMBASSY.ORG) does *not* accept email, the correct address is [chinavisadc@gmail.com](mailto:chinavisadc@gmail.com)
2. There is some confusion over the need for an *original* invitation letter. CNNIC insists that an *original* letter is not needed and travelers need to check with their consulate as to whether an *original* letter is needed. The response from the local consulate was *"Generally, the invitation letter may be submitted as a fax, copy or printout. If necessary, the consular officer will ask the applicant to submit the original invitation letter."* So, this becomes a problem of timing. If a visa application is submitted and the consulate then requests an original letter it may take "up to two weeks" to get it. Will there then be enough time to resubmit the application?
3. Applying for a visa. According to the instructions "Mailed applications are not accepted" and that an applicant may "entrust someone else or a travel/visa agent to submit your application at the visa office." There is no explanation in the staff instructions as to what a "China visa processing company" is or how to find one if an applicant does not live near a consulate. **CT Answer:** *Any company that usually process visas (e.g., travel agencies, travel notaries). This can depend on the region/country they are in. In the United States, you can use visa processing companies like Trava.com.*
4. One travel document issued by staff had an incorrect passport expiration date: DOUBLE-CHECK ALL OF YOUR DATA. Do not assume someone else has done it correctly.
5. The advice by Travel to book your VISA in December which is four to five months in advance is not consistent with other travelers to China opinions. They argue that you should order your VISA so much in advance but more like three months maximum. They claim that you can state date your VISA application if you go to China after three months. The start date of VISA is the date the visa is ordered and the clock starts clicking.
6. Some members of the community have been asking, concerning the Chinese visa application: (2.6): asks, "Who will pay for the cost of traveling and living during your stay in China?" The honest answer is "Inviter", mostly. I just want to confirm that this is what is expected for us to do. **CT Answer:** *Please see the CT Application Form guide in the email. CHECK "OTHER" and ENTER "ICANN"*
7. (2.7) The visa form asks for details about health insurance. If ICANN provides emergency medical assistance; do we list that? **CT Answer:** *ICANN provides emergency medical assistance to our staff through our health insurance; however, we do not have the same provisions for supported travelers. If you have a private health insurance or if your country provides universal health insurance, please indicate that in the form.*
8. For the purposes of (2.8), that the "inviter" is CNNIC based on the this invitation we are supposed to get. But there is a separate entry (2.9) which asks for a "relative, friend or contact person in China". What should we put here? A fellow traveler? Or a local resident? **CT Answer:** *Please see the CT Application Form guide in the email: China Network Information Centre 4 South 4th St., Zhongguancun, Haidian District, Beijing, China 100190 Contact Number: +861058812266*
9. Some members of the community have been wondering about the very short "travel buffer" period which does not allow for much rest before the meeting begins, especially for members traveling long distances.
10. The Chair recommends all At-Large travelers share their experiences here either by posting them in the comments of this page or by contacting the Chair directly.
11. **Fees:** ICANN Constituency Travel has indicated it would refund Visa, photo and shipping costs up to \$200. Look for more details here when available.
12. Emails about changes to itinerary from CT have been vague without links to the itinerary or specifics about what was changed.
13. ~~Not all travelers have received their CNNIC invitation in a timely manner.~~
14. The address for CNNIC is **Floor 1, Building 1, Software Park, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 4 South 4th Street, Zhongguancun, Beijing.** This is requested in the Visa application but not provided in the documentation. **CT Answer:** *China Network Information Centre 4 South 4th St., Zhongguancun, Haidian District, Beijing, China 100190 Contact Number: +861058812266*
15. The Visa application requests the hotel "Province" but Beijing is not in a province, it is one of four federally designated municipalities. So do we enter "BEIJING" or "NONE" in this field. **CT Answer:** *Please enter Beijing under Province*

16. The Visa application of course asks for a Passport Number but also requests an "ID Card Number", what is this? **CT Answer:** [ID Card Number would be any other government issued identification you have received such as a drivers license.](#)
17. The Visa application indicates the single-entry visa will be valid for 3 months from the application date. The instructions indicate applications may start on 1 February 2013. The lunar new year starts 10 February and ends 12 February, the offices were closed at this time, but some have suggested this is in fact a 15-day holiday with limited processing during this period. The ICANN CT document suggests 22 February 2013 as the day to submit your visa application and that the application period can take two weeks, this places the receipt date at 8 March 2013 which is the same day ICANN requires a copy of the Visa. The ICANN website indicates: **"HOLIDAY CLOSURE ADVISORY: OFFICES IN BEIJING WILL BE CLOSED FROM 9-17 FEBRUARY 2013"**. which is completely different from the information in CT instructions. This would suggest that 18 February 2013 is the first day a visa can be applied for, also note that 18 February is a holiday in the United States which means 19 February is actually the first reasonable day to apply for a Visa.
18. Why do the CT instructions indicate we enter "30 DAYS" on the visa application when we will be there for at most 7 or 8 days? **CT Answer:** [In the memo, we state that length of stay is typically for 30 days.](#)
19. ~~The visa application requires Hotel Confirmation yet the itinerary issued by CT does not have a Hotel Confirmation.~~
20. ~~The chair has suggested that a sample completed visa application be provided by CT as a guide.~~

B. ICANN has supplied links for [travel advisories](#) and [general information](#).