Notes from 21 May 2020 APAC Space Web Conference

Overview

The APAC Regional Plan FY21-25 is an implementation plan of proposed regional activities with outcomes aligned to the objectives and goals of ICANN's five-year Strategic Plan (which will take effect on 1 July 2020). As a continuation from the last APAC Space session on 28 April 2020, this webinar discussed the second half of the draft Regional Plan to gather input and feedback from the APAC community. The session covered the following Strategic Objectives which the Regional Plan aims to contribute to:

- Evolve Unique Identifier Systems in Coordination and Collaboration to Continue Serving the Needs of the Global Internet User Base
- Address Geopolitical Issues Impacting ICANN's Mission to Ensure a Single and Globally Interoperable Internet

Other than at APAC Space, anyone with comments on the Regional Plan can submit them directly on the Plan's Community Wiki page. As a guide, feedback examples are found in a blog post by Jia-Rong Low (ICANN).

Details of Session

Strategic Objective 3: Evolve Unique Identifier Systems to Serve Global Internet User Base

Jia-Rong proposed for the APAC Regional Plan to focus on the following three Strategic Goals. The fourth Strategic Goal was related to IANA functions which the APAC Regional Office does not have capabilities for.

3.1 Encourage readiness for Universal Acceptance (UA), IDN implementation and IPv6

In support of Strategic Goal 3.1, the proposed focus areas/activities are:

i) Support UASG (Universal Acceptance Steering Group) activities in the region, in particular UA Local Initiatives.

ii) Partner APAC community to support IDN (Internationalized Domain Names) policy work. Examples include the following:

    a) Integrate APAC scriptsinto Root Zone Label Generation Rules (LGR).

    b) Review second level reference LGRsby IDN LGR Generation Panels.

    c) Participation in PDPs (Policy Development Processes) initiated by ccNSO and GNSO on IDNs and their variant TLDs (Top Level Domains).

iii) Partner RIRs (Regional Internet Registries, i.e. APNIC for the Asia Pacific region) to promote IPv6 deployment.

On (i), Jia-Rong shared that the APAC office would continue to encourage more UA Local Initiatives to be formed in the region. He also highlighted that UASG's activities were structured which made reporting on outcomes more straightforward. This was why UASG was listed explicitly.

On (ii), IDNs played an important role for non-English users in the APAC region to come online. Under the IDN Program, Label Generation Panels were first established to determine the LGR for different scripts. Thereafter, they would be integrated into the Root Zone, as in (ii.a). The work does not end there, and other policy development work is expected on the horizon, such as (ii.b) and (ii.c).

3.2 Improve assessment of, and responsiveness to, new technologies which impact the Internet's unique identifier systems

This goal focused on new technologies that might impact the DNS, such as 5G, AI (Artificial Intelligence) or IoT (Internet of Things). As new technologies were being developed all over the world, Jia-Rong proposed partnering the regional community to gain an understanding of new technologies that might be developed in the region. In doing so, we could study whether these new technologies would have any potential impact on the DNS. A way to do so was to increase communication channels with the regional community so that the APAC office could participate in regional fora that covered such topics.

Discussion

Community facilitator Edmon Chung asked if DNS over HTTPS (DoH) and DNS over TLS (DoT) were included here, and suggested that some examples of technologies could be listed to help the community better orientate on the topic.

Jia-Rong affirmed that DoH and DoT were included, but the focus area was broadly worded to allow the inclusion of any new technologies that may come along. However, he agreed some examples could be listed to help the community.

3.3 Support the continued evolution of the Internet's unique identifier systems with a new round of gTLDs

To support preparations for the next round of new gTLDs (generic Top Level Domains), Jia-Rong proposed focusing on IDNs and UA as these were areas the region felt very strongly about. In promoting IDNs and UA, they would also pave the way for the next round of new gTLDs as IDNs in the next round would enjoy a better user experience through UA.

Discussion

Overall, Edmon noted that two out of three goals for Strategic Objective 3 focused on UA and IDNs. Jia-Rong shared that according to community feedback, these were highly important topics to the APAC community and hence the Regional Office had been devoting resources to them.

Edmon also observed that registrars in the region could be more involved in UA efforts. Jia-Rong agreed this was a good idea, proposing two ways to involve registrars: a) rope them in as part of UASG's Local Initiatives in Strategic Goal 3.1; and b) foster strong partnerships with registrars to promote IDNs under Strategic Goal 3.3.

Strategic Objective 4: Address Geopolitical Issues Impacting ICANN's Mission

Jia-Rong proposed for the APAC office to contribute to both Strategic Goals as laid out in the ICANN Strategic Plan as follows:

4.1 Further developing early warning systems such as ICANN org's Legislative and Regulatory Development Reports

Jia-Rong shared that ICANN was on the backfoot when the European GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) was being formulated. Learning from this experience, the ICANN Board had directed this goal specifically to ensure ICANN would work to be part of the conversation – by providing technical information – in new legislations/regulation that were sprouting up all over the world. Jia-Rong shared that while the APAC Office monitors new legislation in APAC, more help was needed due to limited resources. Jia-Rong thus proposed to partner the community in an information sharing network, whether it be formally or informally.

4.2 Continue to build alliances with the region's Internet ecosystem and beyond to raise awareness of and engage with global stakeholders about ICANN's mission and policy making

In tandem with 4.1, this goal seeks to foster relationships with regulators and policymakers to inform them of how the Internet's unique identifier systems work. This would help them to understand how their prospective legislations could impact the DNS. The envisioned outcome would be an increased understanding of such systems and ICANN's role such that lawmakers would remember ICANN when drafting new regulation/laws. End-users and the industry are also included here because of their interactions with their governments and could help spread the word.

Discussion

Elliott Mann enquired on the best way to alert ICANN on new legislation, and if ICANN would create a mailing list for this. Jia-Rong noted it might be easier to tap existing networks since new legislations do not appear very often. One avenue could be through the APAC Space mailing list. The APAC community could also send any informal alerts by email to the APAC Office. He asked the APAC community for suggestions beyond the above two channels.

GNSO Council Vice Chair Pam Little shared that there had been some interaction before between the Council and Mandy Carver (SVP of the ICANN Government Engagement (GE) Team) on this subject. At the time, the Council decided that ICANN org (lead by the GE Team) should take the lead and provide a mechanism/platform for legislative tracking. Pam wondered whether there were any updates. Jia-Rong noted this and said that he would check with Mandy.

Pam also felt that many APAC community members did not have dedicated staff or resources for government relations and legislative monitoring. Thus she was unsure if the community could assist in this endeavour. Jia-Rong agreed this was a resource-intensive task. If the APAC office is left to this task alone, more resources would need to be factored in, such as to engage political consultancies that conduct legislative monitoring.

To Pam's query on whether we enlisted the help of GAC members, Jia-Rong replied in the affirmative. However, he noted that the challenge with governments is that civil servants tend to narrowly specialise in only the legislations under their portfolios. Hence, GAC members were likely to only be familiar with legislation under their purview. However, the GDPR experience showed it was possible for legislation to be more general in nature but still have spillover effects that significantly impact ICANN.

Edmon suggested that ALSes could also help with being part of the early warning system as they tended to be very attentive to local legislations being developed. There could also be two-way sharing as many ALSes were interested in legislations in other jurisdictions too. ISOC Hong Kong, for example, would be very keen on this.

Other Points of Discussion

Samridh Kudesia asked which stakeholder group ICANN faced the most challenges engaging with in the region. Jia-Rong said this generally depended on the topic as different groups had different interests. APAC Space, for example, lacked government participation but this was largely due to how governments were structured – governments generally preferred face-to-face meetings. Nonetheless, overall the Regional Plan touched on different stakeholder groups in different ways, and GAC members are one such group implicit in the Plan.

While APAC participation had increased significantly overall, a key remaining challenge was having participation from the business community and registries/registrars in ICANN PDPs. These communities were more focused on their own businesses than the overall health of the DNS. Jia-Rong shared that the last APAC Space session touched on this area, which included the forming of a network with these stakeholder groups. By keeping them informed, they could contribute more actively when required, such as through public comments.

Jaewon Son raised that APIGA (Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy) alumni might benefit from a platform/program to allow them to keep up with various Internet governance issues and events. Jia-Rong acknowledged there was no such platform so far, largely because each Internet governance platform (i.e. ICANN, IETF, RIRs, IGF etc.) worked within its own remit. As such, ICANN would not be able to establish a platform beyond what its remit allowed. A good place for alumni to start, however, could be existing platforms such as Youth4IG, and the Fellows.Asia Facebook group.

Action Items

The Regional Office will work on the following community inputs for the Regional Plan:

- List more explicitly where GAC, business community, and registries/registrars are able to participate where possible and appropriate.
- Where relevant, include examples to help the community better orientate on topics/focus areas.
- Check with GE on its intended legislative tracker.