

At-Large Middle East and Adjoining Countries 2016-2019 Strategy Workspace

Public Comment Close	Statement Name	Status	Assignee (s)	Call for Comments Open	Call for Comments Close	Vote Open	Vote Close	Date of Submission	Staff Contact and Email	Statement Number
17 November 2016	Middle East and Adjoining Countries 2016-2019 Strategy	<div>ADOPTED</div> 12Y, 0N, 1A	Wafa Dahmani Zaafouri John Laprise	05 November 2016	07 November 2016	22 November 2016	25 November 2016	22 November 2016	Fahd Batayneh meac.swg@icann.org	AL-ALAC-ST-1116-01-01-EN

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Brief Overview

Purpose: The purpose of this public comment proceeding is to seek input and feedback from interested parties and individuals on the draft 2016-2019 MEAC strategy document

Current Status: The document is currently in its draft format. The Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group (MEAC-SWG) is seeking input from the community.

Next Steps: Feedback received will be incorporated into the strategy document, and then the final strategy document will be developed.

Section I: Description, Explanation, and Purpose

ICANN's *Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group (MEAC-SWG)* announced a call for public comment on the [draft MEAC 2016-2019 strategy](#) [PDF, 1 MB]. Consisting of 48 members and 2 observers, the *MEAC-SWG* was formed in June 2016 to develop ICANN's regional engagement strategy. In developing the strategy, the MEAC-SWG followed the ICANN 2016-2020 strategic plan laid down in the ICANN bylaws, addressing the plan's five strategic objectives below in the region.

- Evolve and further globalize ICANN;
- Support a healthy, stable, and resilient unique identifier ecosystem;
- Advance organizational, technological and operational excellence;
- Promote ICANN's role and multistakeholder approach;
- Develop and implement a global public interest framework bounded by ICANN's mission.

The overall strategic objective is to *"attract more active and engaged participants from the region to contribute to ICANN's policy development processes and to acquire leading roles within the ICANN community"*. The strategy has identified three main focus areas:

- Support a Secure, Stable and Resilient DNS Infrastructure in the MEAC Region
- Promote a Healthy and Competitive Domain Name Marketplace in the MEAC Region

Clarify ICANN's Role in an Evolving Internet Ecosystem through Engaging with the MEAC Community

Section II: Background

In late 2012, ICANN consulted Internet community members in the Middle East on the need for a strategy that defines ICANN's engagement in the region. In early 2013, 22 community members from across the region came together to develop this new strategy. The group was called the Middle East Strategy Working Group (MESWG). The [strategy document](#) went through a public comment period before it was finalized and ready to be implemented. In implementing the strategy, the MESWG suggested developing implementation plans on an annual basis, in close collaboration with ICANN staff.

While the three-year mandate of the Middle East strategy concluded on 30 June 2016, ICANN staff, along with the MESWG, rolled-up their sleeves early on to evaluate the strategy and, at the same time, seek input from the regional Internet community on the need of continuing the strategy for another three years.

After public consultation at ICANN55 in Marrakech (5-10 March 2016) and productive discussions over the MEAC ICANN mailing list, the community suggested the establishment of a Charter Drafting Group (CDG) that would define the work methods of the new MEAC-SWG. The CDG worked from mid-April until mid-May of 2016, and published their [work](#).

In mid-May 2016, a public call was announced, seeking members and observers to join a new MEAC-SWG. 50 community members responded to that call, with 48 joining as members and two as observers.

Section III: Relevant Resources

- 2013 – 2016 Middle East Strategy - <https://community.icann.org/display/MES/Documents>
- Charter Document - <https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=58738200>
- MEAC SWG Working Space – <https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=59642230>

Section IV: Additional Information

Section V: Reports

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The final version to be submitted, if the draft is ratified, will be placed here by upon completion of the vote.



AL-ALAC-ST-1116-01-01-EN.pdf

FINAL DRAFT VERSION TO BE VOTED UPON BY THE ALAC

The final draft version to be voted upon by the ALAC will be placed here before the vote is to begin.

ALAC Statement on the ICANN Middle East and Adjoining Countries 2016-2019 Strategy

While we support ICANN's Middle East and Adjoining Countries 2016-2019 Strategy, we feel that it does not address the existing political environment as it does not adequately account for the outsize role that national governments play in national life. Governments in the Middle East are concerned about the Internet as a matter of domestic order based on their perception of its catalytic role in the Arab Spring. Moreover, since the Arab Spring we are seeing states tightening controls across all Internet related industries and activities. There is also a sense that many if not most Middle Eastern governments prefer the multilateral forum of the ITU over multistakeholder venues such as ICANN where they can express their authority without the necessity of consulting with other sectors.

Therefore, while the strategy successfully identifies and proposes initiatives to involve all key stakeholders, it does not take the necessary preliminary step of a concerted diplomatic outreach campaign by ICANN to each and every national government in the region. Without their acceptance, the successful outcome of all of outreach strategies outlined within the report are in jeopardy and indeed are likely to fail as stakeholders may be unwilling and fearful of participating in activities which may draw official attention. The ALAC recommends that concrete steps be taken for ICANN to implement a concerted outreach campaign to each government in the region, with bilateral discussions to convince governments of ICANN's willingness to work in partnership. This should be carefully timed and coordinated to precede efforts involving other stakeholders.

Additionally, we suggest a greater emphasis on academia in the region. Cultivating credentialed local expertise is an important step towards building trust with governments which rely on them for advice on technical issues. Faculty at universities enjoy a level of trust and are frequently called upon to support policymakers' decisions.

FIRST DRAFT SUBMITTED

The first draft submitted will be placed here before the call for comments begins.

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