

CCWG Accountability – Problem definition

5-13 March 2015

“When I have one week to solve a seemingly impossible problem, I spend six days defining the problem. Then the solution becomes obvious.”

Albert Einstein

1. Problem statement

The Charter of the CCWG-Accountability defines the following problem statement:

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has requested that ICANN “convene a multistakeholder process to develop a plan to transition the U.S. government stewardship role” with regard to the IANA Functions and related root zone management. In making its announcement, the NTIA specified that the transition proposal must have broad community support and meet the following principles:

- Support and enhance the multistakeholder model
- Maintain the security, stability, and resiliency of the Internet DNS
- Meet the needs and expectation of the global customers and partners of the IANA services
- Maintain the openness of the Internet.

NTIA also specified that it would not accept a proposal that replaces the NTIA role with a government-led or an intergovernmental organization solution.

During discussions around the transition process, the community raised the broader topic of the impact of the change on ICANN's accountability given its historical contractual relationship with the United States and NTIA. Accountability in this context is defined, according to the [NETmundial multistakeholder statement](#), as the existence of mechanisms for independent checks and balances as well as for review and redress.

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The concerns raised during these discussions around the transition process indicate that the existing ICANN accountability mechanisms do not yet meet stakeholder expectations. Recent statements made by various stakeholders suggest that current accountability mechanisms need to be reviewed and, if need be, improved, amended, replaced, or supplemented with new mechanisms (see for instance ATRT recommendations). Considering that the NTIA has stressed that it is expecting community consensus regarding the transition, a failure to meet stakeholder expectations with regards to accountability may create a situation where NTIA does not accept the IANA transition proposal as meeting its conditions. Thus

reviewing ICANN's accountability mechanisms was considered to be crucial for the transition process.

The CCWG-Accountability reviewed these guidelines as well as took into consideration inputs from the session organized during ICANN 50 in London, on 26 June 2014, titled "Enhancing ICANN Accountability"¹. Of particular interest were some questions raised by Professor Jan Aart Scholte², from the University of Gothenburg:

- Accountability to whom?
- What is accountability?
- Accountability for what purpose?

The purpose of this section is to provide the preliminary view of the CCWG-Accountability on these fundamental questions, clarifying the issues at stake, in order to guide the work of the group going forward.

2. What is accountability?

The CCWG acknowledges the existence of various definitions of accountability, such as :

- „The condition or quality of being accountable which in turn means responsible; having to give an explanation for one's actions; answerable.” (Longman Dictionary)
- “Accountability refers to the implicit or explicit expectation that one may be called on to justify one's (beliefs, feelings and) actions to others” (Lerner, J.; Tetlock, P.E. 1999, p. 255)
- Another element is a “notion of personal responsibility for potential negative consequences of one's own behavior and actions on others”.
- Accountability may be achieved through the adhering to a framework of agreed rules and standards and of defined rights and responsibilities for those accountable and for those that an individual/entity is accountable to.

As a general concept, accountability encompasses processes whereby an actor answers to others for the effects on them of its actions and omissions. In the present case, then, accountability involves the processes whereby ICANN answers to its stakeholders for the impacts on those stakeholders of ICANN's decisions, policies and programmes.

Accountability is generally understood to comprise four dimensions. One, transparency, means that an actor (ICANN) is answerable to its stakeholders by being open and visible to them. A second, consultation, means that the actor (ICANN) continually takes input from and explains its positions to the stakeholders. Third, review means that the actor's actions, policies and programmes are subject to outside monitoring and evaluation. The fourth dimension, redress, means that the accountable

¹ <https://london50.icann.org/en/schedule/thu-enhancing-accountability>

² Professor Scholte has since then been appointed by the Public Experts Group as an Advisor to the CCWG-Accountability

actor makes compensations for any harms of its actions and omissions, for example, by means of policy changes, institutional reforms, resignations, financial reparations, etc.

Accountability not only manifests itself in strategic, Board decisions, but also in everyday decisions made by and within an organization, through delegation of management responsibilities for instance.

The CCWG-Accountability Charter also provides a helpful starting point to this key question.

Accountability in this context is defined, according to the NETmundial multistakeholder statement, as the existence of mechanisms for independent checks and balances as well as for review and redress³.

The definition clarifies how accountability can be achieved: by providing the appropriate set of mechanisms. It is useful however to replace this definition in its broader context within Netmundial statement :

Open, participative, consensus driven governance: The development of international Internet-related public policies and Internet governance arrangements should enable the full and balanced participation of all stakeholders from around the globe, and made by -consensus, to the extent possible.

- *Transparent: Decisions made must be easy to understand, processes must be clearly documented and follow agreed procedures, and procedures must be developed and agreed upon through multistakeholder processes.*
- *Accountable: Mechanisms for independent checks and balances as well as for review and redress should exist. Governments have primary, legal and political accountability for the protection of human rights*
- *Inclusive and equitable: Internet governance institutions and processes should be inclusive and open to all interested stakeholders. Processes, including decision making, should be bottom-up, enabling the full involvement of all stakeholders, in a way that does not disadvantage any category of stakeholder.*

The goal of the group is to enhance ICANN's accountability by elaborating proposals for enhancements or new mechanisms. The focus on this definition is therefore absolutely critical to the CCWG. However further clarity regarding the definition's various components is needed.

3. Aspects of accountability mechanisms

a. Transparency

³ The CCWG acknowledged that the CWG proposed a definition of accountability as such :

"Accountability provides the ability for an independent entity to impose binding consequences to ensure the IANA Functions Operator meets its formally documented and accepted agreements, standards and expectations". It was felt that the CCWG definition was compatible with the CWG approach. [Comment from Jan Art Scholte : *The CWG definition of accountability cited in note 3 is quite narrow in terms of the dimensions and purposes covered. The CCWG approach is more comprehensive (and better for that).]

With respect to *transparency*, accountability requires that an actor is visible to its stakeholders. In other words, the affected constituents must always, from the start to the finish of a given action, be able to see what ICANN is doing and how. They should also be supplied with information to understand the rationale for ICANN's actions; i.e. why ICANN is acting the way it does. In a situation of accountability, impacted circles should be able readily to discover what decisions are taken, when, by whom, through what procedures, on the basis of what evidence, drawing on what resources for implementation, and with what expected consequences. They should also be provided the information in sufficient advance time to be able to reasonably participate in the decision making process. Without such information stakeholders are left ignorant and cannot effectively scrutinise/scrutinize ICANN, nor participate in its processes; thus transparency is a sine qua non of accountability. Of course there are rare situations (such as criminal investigations) where public interest may require some temporary restrictions on the release of information. However, in accountable governance the default position is timely and full disclosure, and any exceptions to that rule require thorough and documented justification.

Examples include :

- Document Information Disclosure Policy (DIDP)
- Publication of documents several days before decisions are made

b. Consultation

With respect to *consultation*, accountability requires that an actor explains intended actions to its stakeholders, and adjusts previous plans in the light of information, analysis and preferences heard from them. In other words, decision-taking is accountable when affected people are incorporated into the deliberations and have primary responsibility for, and ample opportunities to, shape the outcomes. In thorough accountability this participation extends across the policy cycle, from the initial agenda formulation to the final report and its ultimate implementation. The consultation may be direct (involving the affected persons themselves) or indirect (involving mediating parties such as constituency groups). In the case of indirect participation the mediating agent ('the ICANN community') should in its turn be accountable to those for whom it purports to speak.

Examples include :

- Public comment periods
- Requests for constituency statements

c. Review mechanisms

The definition of "review" is : "a formal assessment or examination of something with the possibility or intention of instituting change if necessary."

With respect to *review*, accountability requires that the impacts of ICANN's actions on its stakeholders are thoroughly and externally monitored and assessed. Such evaluations might take the form of academic studies, civil society reports, judiciary proceedings, journalistic investigations,

Commentaire [RG1]: We should list ICANN's transparency mechanisms such as the Document Information Disclosure Policy (DIDP). Below under review mechanisms (c) we give examples of those. We should also cite the DIDP here. Also, ICANN has a policy (board resolution) that it won't release information within a certain number of days from an upcoming board meeting in order to give participants time to participate. Steve Metalitz noted in the Public Forum in Singapore that this policy is not being enforced and it is difficult for stakeholders to participate at the mtg as a result. These types of transparency policies should be included in our examination.

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Commentaire [RG2]: Here I would provide examples (like we do in c below) of ICANN's consultation process – the public comment periods, requests for constituency statements, etc.

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officially commissioned enquiries, parliamentary reviews, or testimonies of the affected persons themselves. Accountability entails an obligation on an actor to determine how affected circles have been affected. Impacted persons have a right to know how well the impacting agent has complied with its decisions and achieved the promised results. Stakeholders furthermore have a right to receive tenable explanations when outcomes have fallen short of expectations.

The group considers review mechanisms to be mechanisms that assess the performance and relevance of processes or structures, and provide non binding recommendations for improvement.

Examples include:

- Periodic structural reviews of SOs and ACs (as currently mandated in the ICANN Bylaws)
- AoC-mandated ICANN organizational reviews for Accountability and Transparency; Security, Stability, and Resiliency; WHOIS; and Competition and Consumer Trust.

d. Redress mechanisms

The definition of “redress” is : “remedy or compensation for a wrong or grievance”.

With respect to *redress*, accountability requires that an actor provides its stakeholders with compensation in cases where ICANN's actions have had harmful consequences for affected people. This compensation might take the form of apologies, policy changes, institutional reorganisations, staff reprimands, management resignations, economic reparations, or even incarcerations. In a situation of accountability, affected circles must be assured that affecting actors take responsibility for their actions, ~~and~~ learn from any mistakes, ~~and have ability to take corrective measures.~~

The group defines redress mechanisms as mechanisms that focus on assessing the compliance or relevance of a certain decision (as defined in the “purpose” section below), and has the power to confirm, cancel ~~or~~ amend the decision. Thus, an accountability mechanism of the “redress” category, always starts by “reviewing” the decision. However, its output ~~is~~ binding.

Examples include:

- State of California or other legal jurisdictions where ICANN has a presence or sufficient contacts to be held accountable via binding and enforceable Court decisions

4. Qualities of Accountability mechanisms

a. Checks and balances

Checks and balances can be defined as: “a system in which the different parts of an organization (such as a government) have powers that affect and control the parts so that no part can become too powerful”⁴.

⁴ Merriam Webster dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/checks%20and%20balances>

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The group defines “checks and balances mechanisms” as a series of mechanisms put in place to adequately address the concerns from the various interested parties in the discussion and decision process, as well as to ensure that the decision is made in the interest of all stakeholders.

Examples include:

- Establishment of balanced groups of stakeholders to shape or define policy decisions (e.g. the composition of the GNSO Council and the ICANN Board of Directors)
- Ability to provide advice before a decision is made (e.g. Advisory Committees such as GAC, SSAC)

b. Independence

The NETmundial definition of accountability relies on the existence of “independent” mechanisms. It is well known that independence is extremely difficult to define and assess as the demarcation of having no interest, having an interest and being conflicted is often unclear. [Decision makers possessing neutrality of interest in \(or un-attachment to\) the underlying issue is an important goal of independence in accountability mechanisms.](#)

Notably, the group investigated two different views (non exclusive) in order to assess independence: independence of persons participating in the decision process, and independence of a specific accountability mechanism with regards to other mechanisms.

The group acknowledges that not all accountability mechanisms will have the same level of independence. Internal accountability mechanisms with high transparency standards might provide a first level of accountability and external, more independent bodies might act as last resort mechanisms.

i. *Independence of persons participating in the decision process*

The notion of independence is well researched. For instance Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary were adopted by United Nations Congress⁵, including a section defining the independence of the judiciary.

Within ~~ICANN~~^{ICANN}, section 3 of Article IV of the ~~ICANN~~^{ICANN} bylaws define the notion of independence for members of the expected “omnibus standing panel”⁶.

In corporate governance through the notion of independent Director, which appears in many countries’ corporate governance codes of conduct. One definition is provided as such⁷ :

“For the purpose of this clause the expression ‘independent directors’ means directors who apart from receiving director’s remuneration, do not have any other material pecuniary relationship or

⁵ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/IndependenceJudiciary.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/bylaws-2012-02-25-en#IV>

⁷ [Are we making a mockery of independent directors?](#) Dr. Madhav Mehra, President, World Council for Corporate Governance (circa 2004)

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transactions with the company, its promoters, its management or its subsidiaries, which in judgment of the board may affect independence of judgment of the directors."

For the benefit of this CCWG, independence of a mechanism could be assessed through the independence of the persons involved in making or validating the decision along these lines:

The persons involved in making or validating the decision, apart from participating to this mechanism, do not have any other material relationship, transaction or professional aspiration with ICANN [or related to the underlying subject matter of the decision in question](#) which may affect their independence of judgment.

It should be noted that such a definition has triggered an ongoing debate regarding the loss of the qualification of "independent" after a certain number of years of service as Board member in [an organization-company](#).

The group also noted that this definition was focused on "economic" independence, rather than political independence for instance. It was however considered that this addressed the most pressing expectation from stakeholders.

ii. Independence of a specific accountability mechanism

Considering the special nature of the multistakeholder model, which by definition empowers interested parties to participate and make decisions, the group considers that independence could also be considered as independence between the various accountability mechanisms.

Independence of two accountability mechanisms can be assessed through:

- Examining whether the persons making decisions in one of the mechanism are similar to the other mechanism.
- Examining whether the persons making decisions in one of the mechanism are appointed by the persons in charge of the other mechanism.
- Examining whether the persons making decisions in one of the mechanism have material relationships with the other mechanism that may affect their independence of judgment.
- Examining whether the persons making decisions in one of the mechanisms have conflicted interests in any of the mechanisms they take part.

5. To whom should ICANN be accountable?

The CCWG-Accountability provides the following clarification (emphasis added), as well as a definition of stakeholders:

The CCWG-Accountability is expected to deliver proposals that would enhance ICANN's accountability towards **all stakeholders**.

The term stakeholder should be considered for the CCWG-Accountability in its wider acceptance, for instance by relying on the definition provided by the European Framework for Quality

Management (EFQM): a person, group or organization that has a direct or indirect stake or interest in the organization because it can either affect the organization or be affected by it. This includes but is not limited to all ICANN SOs and ACs.

The view of the group is that this definition is useful, and can be further clarified by illustrating which stakeholders can affect ICANN or be affected by ICANN, either directly or indirectly. **These definitions may be referenced at further stages to clarify which parties may have standing ground to certain accountability mechanisms, should participate to certain groups to provide appropriate checks and balances, or assess the level of independence of certain existing or contemplated mechanisms.**

Commentaire [RG3]: This sentence doesn't quite make sense as worded.

Commentaire [MW4]: Good point, I think we can remove it

The group also discussed references to pre-existing categories of stakeholders. The Tunis **A**genda for the **I**nformation **S**society⁸, outcome of the World **S**ummit on **I**nformation **S**society, mentioned “governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.” The Netmundial multistakeholder statement refers to “governments, private sector, civil society, technical community, and academia “. The group’s view was that these categories **may** ~~were~~ not **be** the most appropriate for the issue of **ICANN**’s accountability.

a. Affected parties

Affected parties are individuals or entities upon which the decisions made by ICANN have an impact.

i. *Directly-affected parties*

The group classifies directly-affected parties as parties affected by ICANN’s decisions through contracts, individual decisions or policies. They would therefore include:

Stakeholder	Affected by contracts	Affected by individual decisions made by ICANN	Affected by policy	Comment
gTLD registries	X	X	X	
ICANN-accredited registrars	X	X	X	
Internet users	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	X	if a domain name is taken down for instance
gTLD registrants	X	<u>X</u>	X	through UDRP or WHOIS verification policies for instance
ccTLD registrants				through potential IANA performance issues if they affected security and stability of the DNS
Governments			X	including law enforcement agencies
IP Right owners		X	X	ex: UDRP, URS, TMCH...

⁸ <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html>

Free speech and civil liberties advocates	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	X	
RIRs		X		through numbering allocation policies for instance
ISPs			X	through numbering allocation or naming policies for instance, or for instance deployment of DNSSEC
Registry services providers	<u>X</u>		X	
Domain name resellers			X	
ccTLD managers		X		Mainly as far as IANA decisions are processed
IDN ccTLD managers		X	X	Affected by IDN ccTLD policy and some individual panel decisions
IETF		X		
Dispute Resolution Providers, e.g. for UDRP and URS	X		X	
ICANN contractors such as the TMCH operator	X		x	

Individual decisions in this context are decisions made by [ICANN](#) on operational matters extending beyond policy (implementation or in case of necessity to interpret the policy).

ii. Indirectly-affected parties

Other parties are affected indirectly by ICANN's decisions.

- Specific communities [of users](#), industries, or sectors of the economy (through the introduction of new gTLDs for instance), [or noncommercial civil society](#).
- ccTLD registrars (through common business practices as well as trends in the market shaped by policy – such as new gTLD introduction).
- RIR communities.
- The root zone maintainer, through IANA Functions contract and its own contract with the Department of Commerce, or any future arrangement.
- DNS Name server operators (including root server operators, Internet Service Providers, private network DNS operators, through, for instance deployment of DNSSEC or IPv6).

b. Parties that affect ICANN

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Parties affecting ICANN are parties that influence ICANN's decisions or actions, either directly or indirectly, or shape the environment in which ICANN operates.

i. Parties affecting ICANN directly

The group classifies as parties affecting ICANN directly the individuals or entities that participate directly in ICANN's decision processes. They would therefore include:

- Registry Stakeholder Group (RySG) and Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG)
- Commercial stakeholder group (CSG), i.e. Commercial business users (BC), Intellectual Property Constituency (IPC) and Internet Service Provider and Connectivity Providers Constituency (ISPCP)
- Non Commercial Stakeholder Group (NCSG), i.e. Non-Commercial Users Constituency (NCUC) and Not for Profit Operational Concerns Constituency (NPOC)
- Governments in the GAC
- Security experts (SSAC)
- Internet users (through ALAC)
- RIR communities (through ASO)
- ccTLD managers who are ccNSO members, as well as ccTLD regional organizations such as CENTR or APTLD
- NomCom nominees to the various groups
- Root server operators (RSSAC)
- The NTIA (currently) through the AOC
- ICANN Board
- ICANN staff and contractors
- Community members participating in public comment fora or corresponding with ICANN
- IETF (through arrangements regarding IANA and changes affecting internet identifiers)
- Auditors, (community) working groups, (external) review teams

ii. Parties affecting ICANN indirectly

Other parties affect ICANN or shape its environment, although indirectly, such as:

- The US Congress (through various audits and legislations that affect ICANN as a US-based organization and an organization in contract with the US government through NTIA).
- Governments that are not GAC members.
- ccTLDs that are not ccNSO members.
- Other entities working on communication policy such as the IGF, UN family of organization (CSTD, ITU), Internet Society, etc.
- (Potential) domain name registrants through their buying / selling behaviours shaping the market.
- Future Internet users.

The role of actors outside the institution is very important to the organization's accountability, as described by Allen Buchanan and Robert O. Keohane⁹ : "*It is not enough for the institutions to*

⁹ "The legitimacy of global governance institutions", Ethics and International Affairs, 2006, vol. 20, p. 405ff

make information available. Other agents, whose interests and commitments do not coincide too closely with those of the institution, must provide a check on the reliability of the information, integrate it, and make it available in understandable, usable form, to all who have a legitimate interest in the operations of the institution. Such activities can produce positive feedback, in which appeal to standards of legitimacy by the external epistemic actors not only increases compliance with existing standards but also leads to improvements in the quality of these standards themselves. For these reasons, in the absence of global democracy, and given the limitations of the democratic channel described earlier, legitimacy depends crucially upon not only the epistemic virtues of the institution itself but also on the activities of external epistemic actors. Effective linkage between the institution and external epistemic actors constitutes what might be called the transnational civil society channel of accountability. The needed external epistemic actors, if they are effective, will themselves be institutionally organized."

6. What are the purposes of ICANN's accountability ?

This question mentioned by Professor Scholte in London raised a healthy and thorough discussion on the CCWG mailing list. Different perspectives were expressed, exposing clearly how different the views could be in the community about the ultimate goals and priorities of ICANN. However, the discussion was useful in enabling identification of four -types of purpose that are relevant, within the limited scope of ~~ICANN's~~ ICANN's mission and values. It should be noted that the purposes of accountability may not always be reconcilable with each other. For example, there could be occasions where compliance with legislation in a particular jurisdiction is in tension with ICANN's own due process, security of the Internet and/or (certain understandings of) the public interest.

- a. ICANN should be accountable to complying with its own rules and processes (part of "due process", as a quality of fairness and justice)

One of the key purposes of ICANN's accountability is to ensure that ICANN, when elaborating policies, implementing or enforcing them, follows the specific rules and processes that were set, either by its Bylaws or through the policies themselves. Stakeholders expect ICANN to abide to these rules since ICANN is empowered to affect their operations or environment through its actions.

This implies that accountability mechanisms must be put in place to address for example:

- Disregard of established procedures (such as ~~binding~~ advice not being afforded due deference followed, or the absence of PDP...)
- Decisions being taken outside of remit (a group or staff member taking a decision that extends beyond its mission)
- Violations of policy or process, such as decisions without material information
- Community-approved policies being materially changed in "implementation"

This particular purpose of accountability should not affect the ability to evolve the rules and processes themselves, when appropriate and following predefined rules and procedures.

- b. ICANN ~~ICANN~~ should be accountable to comply with applicable legislation, in jurisdictions where it operates

[ICANN](#) Bylaws state that :

“The Corporation shall operate for the benefit of the Internet community as a whole, carrying out its activities in conformity with relevant principles of international law and applicable international conventions and local law and, to the extent appropriate and consistent with these Articles and its Bylaws, through open and transparent processes that enable competition and open entry in Internet-related markets. To this effect, the Corporation shall cooperate as appropriate with relevant international organizations.”

Thus ICANN, like any organization, is accountable to comply with applicable legislation, in jurisdictions where it operates, as well as internationally agreed laws, including considerations of human rights as bounded by ICANN's mission and core values.

[ICANN's responsibility to govern in the public interest further requires it to conform its policies with internationally recognized human rights standards.](#)

c. ICANN should be accountable to achieving certain levels of performance as well as security

Aside from compliance, ICANN is also expected to deliver certain services to certain stakeholders. These services are, among other things, related to the IANA function, but not only. The Global Domains Division within ICANN serves gTLD registries and registrars. ICANN also operates the L-root.

Like any professional organization, ICANN should be held accountable to provide these services at the appropriate level of performance. This performance can be expressed in terms of:

- Service levels (through, for instance, a Service Level Agreement), expressed for instance in terms of delay to service a request [or agreements with contracted parties that carry obligations that rely upon enforcement from ICANN's Compliance Department](#);
 - Security level (especially for key infrastructure such as DNSSEC facilities) or data [\(including personal information\)](#) collected by ICANN [or required to be collected by ICANN](#);
- Cost to achieve the given levels of performance.

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d. ICANN should be accountable to ensure that its decisions are for the benefit of the public, not just in the interests of a particular set of stakeholders or ICANN the organization.

The term “public interest” is referenced several times in the Affirmation of Commitments between ~~ICANN~~ ICANN and the US Government's Department of Commerce¹⁰. Considering the differences of approach regarding the definition of this notion, which is not provided by the AoC, as well as the changing nature of the needs of the Internet and the Internet users, the group considers that one of ~~ICANN's~~ ICANN's accountability purposes can be defined as ensuring that its decisions are, to quote

¹⁰ <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/affirmation-of-commitments-2009-09-30-en>

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the AoC, “in the public interest, and not just the interests of a particular set of stakeholders”.

[ICANN’s decisions must also ensure that they are not made primarily in the interests of ICANN, the corporation.](#)

The term stakeholder should be understood here as defined above in this document, including directly and indirectly affected parties as well as directly and indirectly affecting parties. Clarifying ICANN’s notion of public interest would however most certainly be highly beneficial to the organization by setting clear expectations with all stakeholders on what it can and cannot be held accountable to. The CCWG-Accountability took note that this action was alluded to in ICANN’s Strategic Plan.

Moreover, in line with this purpose of accountability [and as a bottom-up organization, ICANN](#) has a duty to be as inclusive and open as possible, in order for everyone to have a voice in its processes, which is consistent with the fact that its decisions be not taken in the interest of a particular set of stakeholders. Keeping the community inclusive and self renewing are therefore important goals.

Additional comment received from William Currie, Independent Advisor:

The "problem of accountability" is frequently cast in technocratic terms; it is a problem of poor oversight and inadequate representation, amenable to correction through stringent regulation, more representative electoral and decision-making processes, and backed up through punitive measures. From attempts to frame accountability in these terms, a range of definitions have emerged:

- the process of holding actors responsible for actions;
- the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognised authority and are held responsible for their actions;
- the capacity to demand someone engage in reason-giving to justify her behavior, and/or the capacity to impose a penalty for poor performance

These definitions point to a core sense of accountability as having a set of three features:

- It is external, in that the account is given to an outside authority
- It involves social interaction and exchange, with one side seeking answers or rectification, while the other responds and accepts sanctions; and,
- It implies rights of authority, where those calling for an account assert rights of superiority over those who are accountable.

This is essentially a principal-agent view of accountability, in which the lead actor or principal sets goals and employs agents to accomplish them. The primary accountability problematic thus lies in constraining the opportunistic behavior of agents. The logic of accountability flows from this. The core components of accountability in governance hence are:

- Transparency - collecting information and making it available and accessible for public scrutiny;
- Answerability or Justification - providing clear reasoning for actions and decisions, including those not adopted, so that they may reasonably be questioned;
- Compliance - monitoring and evaluation of procedures and outcomes, combined with transparency in reporting those findings;
- Enforcement or Sanctions - imposing sanctions for shortfalls in compliance, justifications, or transparency.

Because each of these components builds on the others (with transparency being necessary for compliance, and enforcement depending on all), accountability relies on the presence of all four.

To operationalize accountability in practice, two further distinctions are needed:

- vertical accountability refers to mechanisms in which citizens and their associations select representatives and also hold incumbents to account.
- horizontal accountability refers to inter-institutional mechanisms or checks and balances such as review bodies, ombudspersons etc.

This approach to accountability describes the current state of affairs at ICANN and the CCWG's approach. The United States Government through the NTIA has performed the role

of the external authority hitherto and since the Affirmation of Commitments has sought to transition its role to ICANN itself through the refinement of the bottom-up multistakeholder model. The IANA transition is the final step in this process. The CCWG has taken the issues of vertical and horizontal accountability and is exploring them through discussion of a vertical membership model for ICANN with a community veto and tightening up the horizontal mechanisms, for example, related to review mechanisms.

While it is clear that the CCWG is doing what is required within the terms of this accountability approach and this is a necessary step in terms of meeting the challenge of the NTIA with respect to accountability, the question arises as to whether this is adequate. Jan's final point touches directly on this issue. If ICANN were simply a national institution dealing with a national Internet, the principal-agent approach would likely be adequate in itself. But as a complex global institution ICANN needs to do more than this. So it may be worth expanding the problem definition by including and exploring a third direction in addition to the two being currently pursued. The accountability problematic should include:

- improving vertical accountability by reforming representation in existing governance structures.
- improving horizontal accountability through quasi-independent oversight mechanisms, separation of powers, ombudspersons, judicial review and conflict management procedures.
- establishing new approaches to decision-making that are less well charted and constrained by the binary distinctions of principal-agent and vertical-horizontal dichotomy, but which are more pluralistic, on the grounds that this can improve both legitimacy and effectiveness.