**Comment on the diversity sub-group report.**

**Why is diversity important?**

Diversity should be at the core of the multi-stakeholder model. Without diverse structures, staff and leadership, ICANN will fall short of becoming a truly global organization which is supposed to represent all Internet users in the world. When ICANN was created in the 1990s, 75% of Internet users lived in developed countries. Today, more than two thirds of Internet users live in developing countries. However, the way ICANN functions today still lacks diversity, especially at the leadership level. Last year, a study by AFNIC (the “.fr” registry) showed that ICANN leaders are predominantly from North America (40%), native English speakers (66%), men (76%) and from the business sector / technical community (80%). Non-native English speakers, women, people from other regions (Europe, Africa, South America, Asia…) and people from civil society and governments are under-represented.

Link to AFNIC study: <https://www.afnic.fr/en/about-afnic/news/general-news/9961/show/afnic-reveals-figures-on-diversity-within-icann-1.html>

**The diversity subgroup’s recommendations go in the right direction…**

The sub-group report recognizes the value of diversity and proposes a broad definition, including various criteria: Language; Gender; Age; Physical Disability; Diverse skills; Stakeholder group or constituency. The report proposes that SO/ACs assess themselves against diversity criteria and publish an annual report. ICANN staff would then publish a global annual report on diversity based on the AC/SOs’ reports. AC/SOs are encouraged to take actions and design strategies to become more diverse.

**… but it probably won’t be enough to change the way ICANN functions.**

While I recognize that each SO/AC has their own challenges and should design their own diversity strategies and objectives, I’m concerned that the lack of external oversight will only lead to inertia and / or self-congratulation. If ICANN staff only is responsible for publishing an annual report on diversity, the report will probably not propose anything new or any ambitious objective to enhance diversity.

**Is there any solution?**

There are various available options to enhance external oversight for these diversity strategies and reports. One of them is to create a diversity office. Another option would be to have an advisory panel on diversity, with people coming from SO/ACs and in charge of coordinating the staff efforts to draft a global annual report on diversity. The panel could also propose objectives or best practices to SO/ACs, and analyze the gaps between AC/SOs strategies and results. By the way, the Ombudsman sub-group proposes in its recommendations to create an Ombudsman advisory panel with similar views. That could be of interest to the diversity subgroup.