

Xavier Calvez  
Chief Financial Officer  
ICANN

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Dear Xavier,

### **First Consultation on a 2-Year Planning Process**

The Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input on ICANN's First Consultation on a 2-Year Planning Process.

This statement is made on behalf of the GNSO Council. However, our comments are intended to complement, and not replace, any input that may be provided on ICANN's First Consultation on a 2-Year Planning Process by individual GNSO Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies.

#### **Questions/Comments:**

#### **Q1 - Does the community agree that the yearly planning cycle does not provide sufficient time for community extensive input and interaction on the operating plan and budget?**

Response: The GNSO Council notes that to date, the annual planning for the draft fiscal budget and operating plan are the most transparent and detailed ever produced by ICANN org. However, the compressed time frame with which to review an annual budget and operating plan is challenging given the time requirements to allow for the Empowered Community to dutifully consider the budget and if applicable, exercise its power to reject the budget. The Council believes that change allows for the opportunity to improve and thus, sees benefit in moving to a two-year planning cycle, which would seemingly allow for more time for the community to consider and provide input into the operations plan so long as input is provided prior to formulation of the draft budget being prepared for public comment around December.

#### **Q2 - Does the community believe that more time for planning provides more transparency?**

Response: Indirectly, perhaps. The Council does not believe that time is a direct function of transparency, rather, it has more to do with the levels of detail provided in planned projects along with planned costs. However, the Council notes that more detailed information by extension usually requires more time to consume and make sense of the information.

However, to provide more transparency, tracking of changes (i.e. changes to the previous iterations of the plan along with the reasons for the adjustments) might be of a benefit to the community and would allow us to see the direction where the organization is moving, which allows to be able to suggest corrections of the course to ensure that the objectives are followed the way, which is acceptable.

#### **Q3 – How and who should set ICANN's priorities?**

- The current ICANN strategic plan does not prioritize the 5 strategic objectives, they are equally important.
- Should parts of the strategic plan be prioritized of the 5 years it applies to?
- From the strategic trends exercises conducted with several community organizations during 2018:
  - “there is no prioritization, everything is #1 and nothing is #1”
  - “are the community priorities aligned with ICANN mission/vision?”
  - “Focus on technical functions as a priority and avoid allowing budget constraints to negatively affect them”
- Appendix: notes from the cross-community session on “Who sets ICANN priorities?” held during ICANN 59 in Johannesburg.

Response: The Council fully supports prioritization but recognizes this is easier said than done given competing demands and divergent positions and interests. Prioritization at the objective and goal level may be somewhat helpful but prioritization is needed primarily at the portfolio and project level. For example, if GNSO operates at 110% of capacity, what priority should be assigned to an un-planned project and what in-flight projects should be placed on hold until bandwidth is freed?

**Q4 – Should policy development and implementation activities be integral to the planning cycle? For the purpose of better using the limited availability of the community stakeholders, already stretched, and to appropriately allocate ICANN’s support resources, policy development needs and activities could be considered during the planning process:**

Response: The Council fully supports policy development and implementation activities being a part of the planning cycle, as gTLD policy development is a core function within ICANN’s remit. By better integrating policy development into the planning cycle, the resourcing needs can be better accounted for, which the Council believes will lead to efficiencies in the allocation of resources. By way of example, if the Council understands that a face to face meeting, an external facilitator, legal resources or other factors are needed to efficiently progress the work of a PDP, it can be properly accounted for in the budget and thus require less ad hoc scrambling to secure those resources.

- **Should the policy development activities be planned?**

Response: Yes. The GNSO Council believes that a project reporting platform to establish an in-flight and planned project pipeline, that can properly represent current activities and percent bandwidth, is essential to its ability to plan its policy activities. The Council is undertaking steps to better understand the resourcing needs of the various activities in a PDP, which will help it better understand the community and staff capacity, which will allow the Council to make decisions based on priority and make resource planning more predictable. In that regard, the Council welcomes assistance from ICANN org in extending its project management proficiency, either by providing skilled resources or upskilling Councilors and/or staff.

- **What should be planned collectively by the SO/AC, if anything?**

The GNSO Council does not have a position about planning across the SO/ACs, as each group has distinct policy activities, requirements, and outcomes. However, given the rise of CCWGs, the issues being addressed across the community should be well understood, planned where possible, and prioritized accordingly.

- **What should be planned by the GNSO and ccNSO?**

Response: For the GNSO, the simple answer is that absolutely yes, all projects should be planned to the extent possible. The Council maintains an on-going project list, mostly tracking current projects. It does lack prioritization however. How can the Council make tough decisions to suspend work, if necessary, that is considered important to certain stakeholders across the community? What information is necessary to make the decision? While the project list does contain planned work, such as future policy reviews, it is not managed in a way to better understand the policy development pipeline and resources necessary. Also, it is difficult to gauge available bandwidth of the community, predominately resources by volunteers.

Collectively, the GNSO and ccNSO do coordinate on a regular basis and each has a liaison to the other organization. While the bodies have no mechanism to develop policy together, they can coordinate to the extent possible, to seek to ensure a consistent outcome. Identifying and understanding those topics of mutual interest is important.

**Q5 - What activities, other than policy development, should be planned and by whom? Examples:**

- **Reviews**

Response: Yes. The GNSO Council understands that it is already predictable when a review is to be launched. However, it is difficult to gauge the duration of the review itself and it is also difficult to determine the duration to implement changes, not knowing what recommendations could be formulated. It is also noted when a review does kick-off and while it is NOT policy development, it still commands a portion of the available bandwidth. Essentially, there is always a review on-going, so what percentage of the bandwidth will always consume the current pipeline? In addition, oftentimes the Reviews will have some overlap in scope with existing or planned policy work. That potential duplication of work is best avoided.

- **Cross community working groups,**

Response: see statement above. In short, CCWG should be planned where possible.

- **Engagement activities outside ICANN meetings,**

Response: The GNSO Council greatly appreciates that the larger Internet ecosystem presents risks to ICANN's mission and activities. However, the impact of some these is either not understood or not documented. We would like to see a global calendar of events produced which includes those engagement activities which directly impact ICANN, as well as other Internet governance activities which may have an indirect impact on ICANN (along with an explanation as to why). We would support there being more of an emphasis on tangible outcomes being derived from ICANN's participation and/or sponsorship of engagement activities, and regular reporting of what events ICANN is participating/sponsoring, and their associated outcomes, would help us more fully understand the value proposition of this expenditure.

**Q6 - Should the planning process include a formalized dedicated phase to plan for SO/AC activities? If so, how many years should be planned for?**

Response: Yes. The GNSO Council supports a dedicated phase. But it also recognizes that plans have to be adjusted based on external forces. In many ways, this can be considered an on-going exercise.

The GNSO Council is grateful to ICANN for this opportunity to share our perspectives on this important issue and we trust you will find our recommendations helpful. As the GNSO is a part of the Empowered Community we look forward to reviewing all inputs from the public comment process which addresses ICANN's broader strategy and how the operating plan complements the operating budget. Finally, the GNSO Council will be happy to answer any clarifying questions that you may have regarding the contents of this document.

Yours sincerely,

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