

## Statement of the Generic Names Supporting Organization Council on ICANN's Draft Five-Year Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021 through 2025

The Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input on those aspects of ICANN's draft five-year Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2021 through 2025 which are of relevance to our remit. Thus, while this statement is made on behalf of the GNSO Council, our comments are intended to complement, and not replace, any input that may be provided on the Strategic Plan by individual GNSO Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies.

This comment was prepared by the Council's Standing Committee on Budget and Operations (Standing Committee), whose membership includes both Councilors and Subject Matter Experts from across the GNSO. The Standing Committee has reviewed every page of the Strategic Plan and accompanying backgrounder, and for ease of reference, our comments follow the original structure of the document.

### Introduction to the Strategic Plan

The GNSO Council believes that the potential for greater regulatory activity and other internal and external factors underscore the importance of ICANN's next strategic plan continuing to guide ICANN org and the ICANN community toward more accountability, transparency, and representative engagement. We are broadly comfortable with the five trends that have been identified, however we offer more specific comments in the text that follows.

### Vision

For ease of reference, we have extracted specific text from the Strategic Plan, and will offer line-by-line annotations:

*To be a champion of the single, open, and globally interoperable Internet, by being the independent, trusted, multistakeholder steward of the Internet's unique identifiers, and by providing an open and collaborative environment where diverse stakeholders come together in the global public interest to:*

This introductory statement to the vision is broadly acceptable to the GNSO Council.

*- Secure operational excellence of the IANA functions;*

The GNSO Council asks that 'secure' be revised to 'ensure', because to secure privileges security concerns, while 'ensure' more accurately reflects the desire to guarantee excellence.

*- Continuously improve the unique identifier systems;*

This statement is acceptable.

*- Strengthen the security of the Domain Name System and the DNS Root Server System;*

This statement is acceptable.

*- Evolve ICANN's governance model to remain effective, transparent, and accountable;*

This statement calls for action to remain the same. It implies that ICANN is effective, transparent, and accountable. It is important to the GNSO Council that ICANN acknowledges that it is far from perfect in these areas, and so the GNSO Council proposes that ICANN acknowledge that continued evolution is needed here. A better wording would be, "Evolve ICANN's governance model to **be increasingly** effective, transparent, and accountable".

*- Improve the effectiveness of ICANN's policy development processes;*

The GNSO Council is concerned that there is a danger in privileging 'effectiveness' in the Policy Development Process without concurrently considering inclusivity. We therefore ask this sentence be revised to read, "Improve the effectiveness of ICANN's **multistakeholder** policy development processes".

*- Anticipate and manage the impact of legislation and regulation; and*

This statement is acceptable and important. The GNSO Council supports the continued examination of legislation and regulations so to foster a fuller understanding of ICANN's roles and responsibilities. If ICANN continues to have difficulties in recognizing, understanding, and balancing its legal obligations in relation to activities within its remit (as was for the case, for instance, with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation), this could pose a significant threat to the organization's legitimacy, sustainability, and reputation.

*- Ensure ICANN is technically robust and financially sustainable.*

This statement is acceptable. The GNSO Council would like to see a downward trend in ICANN's operating costs without there being any undue impacts on policy development activities, which are and must remain a core ICANN activity.

## **Mission**

The GNSO Council offers no comments on this section.

## **Strategic Objectives**

*1. SECURITY: Strengthen the security of the Domain Name System and the DNS Root Server System.*

The GNSO Council supports this objective.

*1.1 Strengthen DNS coordination in partnership with DNS stakeholders to improve the shared responsibility for upholding the security and stability of the DNS.*

The GNSO Council supports the Targeted Outcomes and Risks.

*1.2 Strengthen DNS root server operations governance in coordination with the DNS root server operators.*

The GNSO Council supports the Targeted Outcomes and Risks.

*1.3 Understand and mitigate security threats to the DNS through greater engagement with DNS hardware, software, and service vendors.*

The GNSO Council supports the Targeted Outcomes and Risks.

*1.4 Increase the robustness of the DNS root zone key signing and distribution services and processes to meet growing security needs.*

We offer no comments on this bullet, as it falls outside of our expertise.

*2. ICANN's GOVERNANCE: Improve the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance.*

The GNSO Council supports this objective.

*2.1. Address the increasing needs of inclusivity, accountability and transparency, while at the same time ensuring that work gets done and policies are developed in an effective and timely manner*

The GNSO Council agrees with the Targeted Outcomes and Risks. Indeed, we think they are accurate.

*2.2 Strengthen ICANN's multistakeholder decision-making process.*

The GNSO Council asks for clarification as to how ICANN proposes to ensure that Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees “make timely and effective decisions that are in the global public interest.” While this goal is admirable, we think it would be more realistic and accurate to replace “are in the global public interest” with “support the reliability, stability, and security of the Domain Name System”.

*2.3 Strengthen the inclusivity and openness of ICANN's multistakeholder model by improving and sustaining diverse representation and active, effective participation.*

The GNSO Council agrees with the Targeted Outcomes and Risks. However, it is important that such goals include the importance of “informed” policy making. This could be strengthened by a small change, “... and active, **informed**, effective participation.”

*3. UNIQUE IDENTIFIERS: Evolve the unique identifier systems to continue to serve the needs of the global Internet user base.*

The GNSO Council supports this objective.

*3.1 Encourage readiness for Universal Acceptance, IDN implementation, and IPv6 by increasing awareness to enable more end users to use the Internet.*

The GNSO Council agrees with the Targeted Outcomes and Risks.

*3.2 Improve understanding of and responsiveness to new technologies by greater engagement with industry, academia, standards development organizations, and other relevant parties.*

The GNSO Council requests clarification regarding the intended implementation of this outcome. Without further clarification, we suggest that “new technologies” be revised to read, “new technologies which directly impact the reliability, stability, and security of the Domain Name System” so to ensure ICANN stays on mission.

*3.3 Continue to deliver and enhance the IANA functions with operational excellence.*

The GNSO Council agrees with the Targeted Outcomes and Risks.

*3.4 Plan a properly funded, managed, and risk-evaluated new round of gTLDs.*

The GNSO Council acknowledges the Targeted Outcomes and Risks, but can only accept this outcome subject to the satisfactory completion of relevant policy development work first being undertaken. Accordingly, we request that this objective be reworded so as not to pre-suppose any outcome: *"Evaluate a properly funded, managed and implemented expansion of gTLDs."*

*4. GEOPOLITICS: Address geopolitical issues impacting ICANN's mission to ensure a single and globally interoperable Internet.*

The GNSO Council supports this objective.

*4.1 Further develop early warning systems, such as ICANN org's Legislative/Regulatory Development Reports, to identify and address global needs and threats, demonstrating ICANN's trustworthiness in resolving the challenges within its remit in a timely manner.*

The GNSO Council agrees with the Targeted Outcomes and Risks.

*4.2 Continue to build alliances in the Internet ecosystem and beyond to raise awareness, and equip stakeholders from around the world to become active participants in ICANN's policy making.*

The GNSO Council agrees with the Targeted Outcomes and Risks.

*5. FINANCIALS: Ensure ICANN's long-term financial sustainability.*

The GNSO Council supports this objective.

*5.1 Enhance ICANN's understanding of the domain name marketplace.*

While market trends should be considered in organizational guidance, it should be noted that market trends are only relevant insofar as they 1) overlap with the current mission of ICANN, 2) as they affect ICANN's stability and resilience, and 3) impact ICANN's stream of revenue.

*5.2 Strengthen cost management and financial accountability mechanisms.*

The GNSO Council agrees with the Targeted Outcomes and Risks.

*5.3 Enhance ICANN's financial planning model to better balance economic changes and stakeholders' needs.*

The GNSO Council agrees with the Targeted Outcomes and Risks. It is crucially important to the GNSO Council that we are provided with further insights into how resources are being allocated to support and/or accommodate the needs of the various Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees. Businesses routinely have to separate overhead and other forms of expenditure, attributing them to specific business units for internal financial planning. We only ask that ICANN do the same for the SOs and ACs.

There are different mechanisms that ICANN can choose to utilize when it presents the budget to the community. The current approach of portfolios tells us which projects money is being spent on, but it does not tell us who is spending it, where, or really, on what. We would like to see improvements here, so that the 'chain of command' for spending is clearer. We would find it helpful to be able to review the budget and to understand how much budgetary authority we can attribute to each department, understanding, of course, that there may be changes and shufflings of portfolios that occur internally throughout the course of the fiscal year. We note that the comments of the other SO/ACs and associated Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies, which will be submitted separately, may provide elaboration or address some goals in more specificity.

**Conclusion**

We appreciate the opportunity to submit the GNSO Council's perspectives on the draft Strategic Plan. We find that some targeted outcomes seem imprecise while others are very specific. The GNSO Council appreciates the clarity and focus of calling for specific planning, prioritizing, and preserving of actions. We think that there should be an increased emphasis on ensuring that ICANN stays within the picket fence, and we strongly oppose mission creep.

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 budget. Finally, the GNSO Council would be happy to answer any clarifying questions that you may have regarding the contents of this document.

Yours sincerely,

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