ICANN | GNSO
Generic Names Supporting Organization

Xavier Calvez
Chief Financial Officer
ICANN

8 February 2019

Dear Xavier,

Statement of the Generic Names Supporting Organization Council on
ICANN's Draft Operating Plan and Budget for Fiscal Year 2020

The Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input on those aspects of ICANN's proposed Operating Plan and Budget for the fiscal year 2020 which are of relevance to the GNSO Council's 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 proposed FY20 Operating Plan and Budget by individual GNSO Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies.

This comment was informed by discussion and research from 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 focused its efforts on exploring whether the resources directed at policy development are appropriate, both in relation to current workload, and in view of planned policy activities for FY20 and the risks or threats to the fulfillment of the GNSO Council's responsibilities within ICANN's larger mission and remit.

As an overarching comment, the GNSO Council recognizes the significant improvements in the level of detail provided, which has been a consistent evolution in response to the ICANN community's feedback. However, the GNSO Council notes that the Budget is still presented in a way that makes it difficult for the community to be able to grasp at a glance where resources are being allocated. There is no implied criticism here of the current budget documents, however, moving forward we request that data be presented both at the current level of detail, and we request a high level "at a glance" summary approach, where we can easily see the bigger picture.

Examples of summary categories that would be helpful to the Council, and also, we believe, the broader ICANN communities, would be an "at a glance" roll up of total projected expenditure in key buckets that can help the GNSO Council better understand how policy development, coordination, and onboarding of additional resources into its communities are being supported, or will be in the next budget cycle.

This summary page could be published on the same page as the table outlining the total size of the projected budget for the coming fiscal year.

Our further comments provide both comments of a general nature, and then, comments of a more specific nature.

General Comments:

- The GNSO Council recognizes and takes seriously its responsibilities as a part of the Empowered Community. It is an honor to be part of ensuring ICANN's accountability not only to the GNSO's communities, but overall to the global community.

- As we flagged in our comments last year, we have taken great care to examine the proposed budget to understand what resources have been allocated to each GNSO Stakeholder Group, and to the other Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees. We are of course focused on the role and functions of the GNSO Council, but we recognize that we are part of a larger ecosystem within ICANN and thus we look to understand the "spend" across the full budget and operating plan.

- Although we have budget experts drawn from the various GNSO constituencies as part of our Standing Committee, we find it is difficult to approximate the levels of financial support provided directly and indirectly to the various Supporting Organizations, Advisory Groups, and associated Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies. This information is essential for each of these groups, including the GNSO Council to hold ourselves, and others, mutually accountable.

Specific Comments:

- GNSO policy development and coordination are core ICANN activities that we hope can be prioritized. We recognize that while the GNSO Council is primarily engaged in managing GNSO policy development, it is joined by the ccNSO, SSAC, ASO, ALAC and GAC in contributing to stable, informed, multistakeholder policy development. Thus, we would like to understand what proportion of the organization's spend can be reasonably connected to policy development activities for all who have such responsibilities, and we ask that ICANN org consider how best to provide this information more clearly for all aspects of policy development and coordination.

- The GNSO Council anticipates that our active Policy Development Process Working Groups will require funds in FY20 in order to meet the terms of their respective charters. While specifics cannot be foreseen in detail at this time because we have not been provided with figures from FY19 or earlier years to approximate costs, we anticipate requiring resources for activities including:

  - face-to-face meetings outside of public ICANN meetings to advance policy development work;
  - leadership training and skills development;
  - an annual Council Strategic Planning Session; and
  - the provision of relevant professional expert assistance, such as independent facilitators, conflict resolution specialists, external legal advisors, and/or other relevant expert advice.

- The GNSO Council recognizes the substantial benefits that have been achieved by holding a Strategic Planning Session of the GNSO Council in the first quarter of 2018 and 2019. This session shaped our workplan throughout 2018 and saw Councillors brainstorm, develop, and ultimately begin to implement the Council's Policy Development Process 3.0. The Council would like to encourage the continuation of an annual strategic planning session as part of the core budget; but for now, we ask that resources be made available for a Strategic Planning Session of the GNSO Council in Q1 2020.

- The GNSO Council notes that many commenters raised concerns in FY19 about continued growth in the organization's overall personnel and related costs. As we stated in our comment last year, the GNSO Council believes that growth of staff numbers should only occur under explicit justification and replacements due to staff attrition should always occur with tight scrutiny; especially in times of stagnate funding levels. We encourage ICANN org to provide more diligent explanations and justification for staff allocated to each group that affects policy development, coordination, and implementation

- The GNSO Council understands that there is no funding in the budget for the Document Drafting and Development Pilot Program. This program was used broadly by the GNSO's Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies, and we understand was well-received and created value for the ICANN community. We encourage ICANN to help reduce volunteer burnout by providing communities with 125 hours of research assistance in FY20.

- The GNSO Council asks that resources be allocated in FY20 for a Non-Contracted Parties House Intersessional of equivalent size and scope of either FY17 or FY18. Funding for this resource was allocated in FY19, however, as a gesture of good will due to the revenue shortfall for ICANN, the NCPH of the GNSO voluntarily agreed not to hold an Intersessional this year in order to help replenish the reserve fund. Moving forward, it was agreed that this would occur every two years. Accordingly, the next Intersessional should be in FY20.

- The GNSO Council requests ICANN org presents contingency spending with more detail. A single lump figure is not fully informative. We also believe that the budget should include a specific placeholder for activities rolled up into this envelope, otherwise we are not seeing an accurate budget. If we know what is not funded and could potentially need to be funded in the coming fiscal year, then we should know what the actual budget allocation could be.

- The GNSO Council asks that ICANN org publish information on its planned pipeline for website upgrades. We understand that there are various initiatives underway to improve the findability of content and to improve the user experience of ICANN websites, and we would appreciate being first in the queue for a website upgrade. In that spirit, it would be helpful for the GNSO to understand what that queue is, and when we can expect the GNSO website to receive needed enhancements.

The GNSO Council appreciates this opportunity to share our perspectives on these important issues. 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,

Keith Drazek	Rafik Dammak	Pam Little
GNSO Chair	GNSO Council Vice Chair	GNSO Council Vice Chair
	Non-Contracted Parties House	Contracted Parties House