

ICANN | GAC

Governmental Advisory Committee

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Governmental Advisory Committee Comment on ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021 – 2025

The ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on ICANN’s draft Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021 – 2025 (see - <https://www.icann.org/public-comments/strategic-plan-2018-12-20-en>). GAC members have reviewed ICANN org’s planning documents and proposals and herein provide targeted comments regarding specific aspects of the proposed strategic plan that are applicable to GAC priorities and activities.¹

General Comments

Strategic planning is important to the ICANN organization. The GAC acknowledges the effort of all ICANN communities to participate in this strategic planning effort. The GAC appreciates the specific opportunity afforded to GAC members and observers to contribute to the development phase of the initial draft strategic plan – specifically during ICANN61 in San Juan, Puerto Rico (see - <https://gac.icann.org/sessions/icann61-agenda-item-30-strategic-outlook-community-session> and <https://mm.icann.org/mailman/private/gac/attachments/20180417/10a39b0a/GACTrendsSession13March2018Outputs-0001.pdf>).

That input is appropriate because active government participation in ICANN activities is a principle firmly rooted in the ICANN Bylaws. That role should be clearly acknowledged in the new Strategic Plan for 2021-2025.²

The ICANN Bylaws commit the organization to “employ open, transparent and bottom-up multistakeholder policy development processes that are led by the private sector “... while duly taking into account the public policy advice of governments and public authorities” (see ICANN Bylaws section 1.2(a)(iv). Moreover, ICANN’s core values obligate the organization to “... recogniz[e] that governments and public authorities are responsible for public policy and duly

¹ This comment was prepared by the Committee’s leadership and is made on behalf of the entire GAC. It has been subjected to review of the GAC membership and is intended to complement, but not replace, any input that may be provided on the ICANN Draft FY20 Operating Plan and Budget and Five-Year Operating Plan by individual GAC members.

² The Bylaws clearly state that ICANN itself “does not hold any governmentally authorized regulatory authority” (see, ICANN Bylaws Section 1.1(c)).

tak[e] into account the public policy advice of governments and public authorities.” (see ICANN Bylaws section 1.2 (b)(vi)).

Specific Comments

The GAC acknowledges the framework of the proposed strategic plan that outlines five major strategic goals. Mindful of the commitments to governments in the ICANN Bylaws, the GAC generally supports the draft Strategic Plan’s second objective to “Improve the effectiveness of ICANN’s multistakeholder model of governance” (see Strategic Objective 2). The following comments focus specifically on this second of the five strategic objectives.

The GAC agrees that to achieve this second objective, three primary strategic goals should include:

- 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;
- 2.2. Strengthen ICANN’s multistakeholder decision-making process; and
- 2.3. Strengthen the inclusivity and openness of ICANN’s multistakeholder model by improving and sustaining diverse representation and active, effective participation.

- **Strategic Goal 2.2**

The GAC believes that the second strategic goal would be bolstered by specifically mentioning the contribution of policy advice in the multistakeholder decision making process. Thus, in the list of “targeted outcomes for strategic goal 2.2, the term “policy advice” should be added. Thus, the following targeted outcome should be amended to include a reference to policy advice. Thus:

“Multistakeholder model processes – such as policy development and reviews, among others – continue to evolve in an efficient and accountable manner.”

should be amended to read:

“Multistakeholder model processes – such as policy development, **policy advice** and reviews, among others – continue to evolve in an efficient and accountable manner.”
(recommended new text in **bold red** font)

- **Strategic Goal 2.3**

The GAC welcomes the draft plan’s emphasis in strategic goal 2.3 to improve and sustain “diverse representation and active, effective participation”. The GAC is working to achieve improved participation and engagement among contributors to its own committee work. That philosophy

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was also integral to the recent joint statements shared with the ICANN Board by the GAC and the At Large Advisory Committee encouraging the organization to provide additional support to enable effective participation of all ICANN stakeholders.

In the first Joint Statement, “Enabling inclusive, informed and meaningful participation at ICANN”, issued at ICANN60 in Abu Dhabi on 2 November 2017, the two advisory committees urged the Board to incorporate new document management and briefing capabilities to enable non-expert stakeholders to meaningfully participate in ICANN’s processes and make their voices, their needs and interests heard (see, e.g., <https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann60-abu-dhabi-communicue>).

In its reply, the Board referred to the Information Transparency Initiative (ITI), launched in January 2018, which will, hopefully, lead to the creation of a document managing system that – as required by the ALAC and the GAC – will allow, even to non-expert stakeholders, a quick and easy access to ICANN documents. It is important that completion and delivery of the ITI be a featured part of the strategic plan implementation – perhaps deserving its own specific reference as one of the outcomes of this strategic goal 2.3 or elsewhere in the strategic plan.

More recently, as a follow-up to that initial joint statement, the two committees further clarified the need for improved executive summary materials, stating “clear and up-to-date information to facilitate quick understanding of relevant issues and high interest topics is key for inclusive, informed and meaningful participation by all stakeholders, including non-experts. (see, <https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann63-barcelona-communicue>).

Closing

The GAC appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the ICANN organization’s strategic planning process and looks forward to further community collaboration to consider and discuss this important initiative.

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