



## Confidential Update for ICANN Board and SO/AC Chairs

### Facilitation for SSR2 Review Team

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I have now completed my assignment with the SSR2 Review Team as initiated by the ICANN Board and SO/AC Chairs. My involvement ended after the Washington face-to-face meeting. The team is now back in action, with a number of communications and revised documents being circulated and posted to the team wiki. I don't propose to repeat any of that in this report – that is the team's job. The purpose of this report is to provide the Board and the Chairs with some of the lessons from my brief involvement and a perspective on the team's health going forward. In the interests of transparency, I have shared this report with the team.

### Issues identified and outcomes

The following is a brief summary of the issues identified from the SO/AC Chairs confidential survey, from reviewing wiki materials and from my one-to-one interviews with team members (including some ex-members). Much of this material was provided to the team members (in a longer form) in mid-July, four weeks prior to the face-to-face meeting. The right hand column is a summary of my perspective of how the team has now tackled each of the issues.

Issue	Approach
1. The SSR2 Review is amongst the first major accountability tasks to be undertaken by volunteers under the transitioned ICANN multi-stakeholder model and under the new Bylaws. <b>Understandably, there has been some uncertainty and disagreement about the conception, scope, focus, methodology and desired outcomes of the Review.</b>	<i>The face-to-face meeting allowed the Team to discuss these issues in some depth. While there will no doubt be further differences to resolve, the ability to discuss and resolve is, in my view, much progressed.</i>
2. The concepts of Security, Stability & Resiliency for the operation of ICANN's role in the Internet are not precisely defined nor has a shared community understanding yet developed. The Review Team has the job of taking the high level, broad concepts of the Bylaws and figuring out their practical application. Team members also brought their own 'mental models' of what the Review should involve and <b>needed a more methodical, effective way of discussing and resolving the inevitable uncertainties and disagreements.</b>	<i>The face-to-face meeting allowed the Team to discuss these issues in more depth and make some progress. These conversations are difficult to have by teleconference – in my view face-to-face meetings are essential to resolving these big picture issues.</i>

3. While people external to the team labelled some of this uncertainty as confusion over scope, it is evident from the conversations I had that people mean different things when they talk about, for example, 'scope'. **The team has not had an agreed set of definitions / distinctions around what is meant by terms like scope, focus, approach, methodology or desired outcomes.**

*As is normal when a highly diverse team comes together with their own experience and assumptions, not everyone had the same understanding of the terms. The face-to-face meeting provided an opportunity to improve alignment, but it is something that the team will need to continue to carefully watch.*

4. Team members had formed a range of views about how the Review tasks can reasonably be completed (approach/methodology). Some strongly feel that the task must be carried out by volunteers in order to keep faith with the Bylaws conception and to achieve credibility in the eyes of the Community. Others believe that a diverse group of volunteers will never have all the skills, nor the time to complete the work themselves and that they should be directing, overseeing and reviewing work completed by a combination of ICANN support staff and hired contractors. And of course, there are those whose views fall somewhere in between and believe that different parts of the Review work will need different approaches. **The team had not reached agreement about how the work should be done, nor a common model of the alternative approaches that would help in making choices.**

*The differences of views were well aired at the face-to-face and a better understanding of the different perspectives was reached. The team agreed that as each stream of work was re-examined, the team would debate and decide the approach that best suits the task.*

5. External relationships are critical for the success of a review such as this one. ICANN the organisation and its key technical staff have responsibility for the design and day-to-day management of most of the functions that the Review will be looking at. In the ICANN ecosphere, community bodies (eg. SSAC) have responsibility for continuous oversight and advice. The Board and SO/AC Chairs have responsibility for overall governance and maintaining 'peace' in a dynamic and at times,

*The team acknowledged the need to communicate more systematically with key stakeholders through a range of available channels, including blogs, directed emails, at ICANN conferences, etc.*

*The team acknowledged the need for such communication is*

high tension environment. This is a community that is prone to scepticism and suspicion and some value independence above other considerations.

Providing assurance to all of these groups that the Review will be robust, independent, competent and sensitive is critical to the required level of confidence, cooperation and support. **The external communication and relationships need to be more proactively managed to create the desired level of confidence in the Review team.**

*even greater following the pause.*

6. There are a range of issues that were reported around the original forming of the group, including whether people understood the extent of the work being required of them, around team dynamics and leadership and conflicts of interest and exclusion/inclusion and numbers of other problems. Some of these may be root causes of problems and some may simply be symptoms of other issues. It is often hard to distinguish cause and effect once members start to lose confidence in the group.

*The team spent quite some time working through team dynamics issues, leadership issues, inclusion and participation issues. In my view, quite some progress was made, however the team generally and the leadership group particularly, will need to maintain a focus on this dimension of the effectiveness of the review.*

7. Members of a team like this do not have to agree with each other on all things, but they do need to respect each other and understand what each can contribute. **It is evident that the combination of team activity / processes and the events of the 'pause' mean that these team dynamic issues have become bigger and more entrenched than they should.**

*The team has committed to a forward-looking focus, setting past events behind them. Some success and progress in the next few months should energise and confirm this approach, however the Team leadership will need to take care that attention is not drawn back into history.*

8. The team is very diverse. This extends to languages spoken, technical background, professional training, constituency /interest area, management / leadership experience, review/consulting experience, ICANN experience and location/timezones. This is what was envisaged in the Bylaws for this Review, however our experience with very diverse groups is that

*The value of three days of face-to-face contact cannot be underestimated and can be expected to improve the team's relationships. The challenge is ensure that this is sustained over time.*

*The re-configured leadership*

they require great patience, highly methodical processes, lots of time spent on objectives, on scope, on understanding assumptions and mental models of what the job is, work on ground rules and protocols, higher levels of preparation than might be expected, regular engagement, frequent double-checking that meaning is shared, cultural sensitivity, careful documentation – both before and after decisions, and skilled, experienced (and time-consuming) leadership/chairing – and more great patience. **While I understand that quite some effort was originally made across all these things, it appears that it either had not been enough or not sufficiently on target.**

*group includes new and existing members and seems to me to be well placed to maintain an adequate sensitivity to what is needed for a team of this diversity.*

9. Team teleconference meetings have been widely regarded as awkward, time-wasting and unproductive and a source of significant frustration. Time zones are an ICANN occupational hazard, but this team seems to have greater global distribution than most, meaning that it is more than usually difficult to schedule meetings at a workable time and there has been frequent non-attendance. For a range of reasons, many members are reticent on calls, opinions are often offered by text and not necessarily discussed or resolved. All report that face-to-face meetings have been much more productive. One dimension of dissatisfaction over the teleconference meetings has been the apparent absence of a clear definition and application of the consensus principle. **At the least, there is a need for a more structured and productive approach to the team teleconference meetings. There is also a need for more fulsome record of discussions and resolutions.** This will involve a renewed commitment from everyone.

*One immediately observable change in the dynamic of the re-configured team, by the end of the face-to-face, has been the willingness of members to speak up and contribute their views. The team also recognised the need for better recording of meeting discussions and decisions (the progressive narrative) and better understanding of how decisions on particular issues are to be made.*

*These will assist the team and, with some patience and preparation, should mean that teleconference meetings can be used for substantive progress of the review's work.*

10. Some doubts were raised externally to the team about how well the mix of skills and experience matched the challenges of this important Review.

*The team has re-assessed its skills mix and is satisfied that it is sound for a community review. In my view, the new team*

members bring a very useful mix of skills and experience to the team. It is also my assessment that the team's success will hinge on its leadership, its ability to maximise contribution, its ability to sensibly construct an approach to each of the streams of work and its skill in communicating and engaging with ICANN org and the community – not on the depth of its technical skills.

11. There is still quite some anger and frustration at the handling of the 'pause' by the Board and /or SO/AC Chairs – and also some who supported the need for an intervention. In my view, there is little value in going over this again and again and **for progress to be made, this issue has to be put behind the team.**

*Understandably, the history of the 'pause' has been subject of numerous team conversations. By the end of the face-to-face, there was agreement to focus on moving forward.*

*The team leadership will need to be careful to avoid unproductive revisiting of history. Strong, evident support for the Review team from the Board and SO/AC Chairs will be important to this.*

12. A number of issues have been raised with me regarding support from ICANN technical staff. Some feel they have not been sufficiently responsive to requests for information, pointing to a number of requests for information that remain outstanding. Others point out that many of the outstanding requests are a function of the 'pause' or of difficulties providing information in the absence of agreed non-disclosure arrangements. **In my view, there are sound avenues for resolving these issues and the team needs to revisit and refresh its own approach before re-opening requests for information.**

*From the history, it is apparent that there are complex issues involved relating to scope, methodology, and communication and are best managed going forward once the team has revisited and refreshed the scope and work programs for each of the streams of work. I understand that this is underway.*

13. Some have raised dissatisfaction with the support from ICANN MSSSI staff. Others feel that these criticisms are quite unfair and have been upset about the extent and style of criticism of ICANN staff.

There are different views about the proper role of the support team. Many acknowledged the difficult balance for staff of encouraging and facilitating progress, without being seen to be influencing or biasing the review outcomes. **A clear understanding of the roles of staff, protocols for making requests, what can reasonably be expected, sound interpersonal relationships and ways to resolve the inevitable tensions are essential priorities for the team.**

*By the end of the three day face-to-face, the team began to work through the relationship with ICANN MSSSI staff and what changes to support might be needed. I encouraged the group to allow this to be managed progressively by the new leadership team and I see from email exchanges that this has begun.*

Overall, my assessment of the period of facilitation is that there has been a very promising commencement of the re-start to the Review and I would be optimistic that with some early successes to reinforce the newly agreed approach, and with support from the Board and SO/AC Chairs, the team is capable of completing the task ahead of it – both professionally and with the confidence of the ICANN community.

In hindsight, some of the issues confronted by the Review Team are unsurprising when something as complex as this is undertaken by a diverse, geographically spread team for the first time under new rules. A mechanism for grappling with uncertainties and teething problems as they arose would have been of great help. It may have been that the desire to maintain arms-length independence for the Review Team was given too much weight and limited the kind of dialogue that would have enabled earlier resolution of issues.

***Recommendation: The learnings from the Review Team experience should be methodically collected at the end of the process, with a view to informing subsequent reviews and, if needed, refining Bylaws and/or policy.***