ISPCP Constituency

Initial input on the Impact of new gTLDs on ICANN and its structure

This document represents the initial views of the ISPCP Constituency on the impact of the new gTLD program on the GNSO and ICANN.

The ISPCP believes the introduction of the new GTLD program will have a significant impact on ICANN and its support Organisations.

There is a need to recognise that the expansion of the gTLD name space has the potential to impact many existing stakeholder groups and that the main interests and drivers for those stakeholders may change. There will certainly be increase participation from new players such as brand holders, applicants and eventually new gTLD holders. But many existing stakeholders will also fit within those different categories and the carefully constructed boundaries between Constituencies and Support Organisations will blur.

Against that background there is a requirement to maintain the integrity of the organisation and ensure a fully functional model for policy development remains in place. Failure to protect the organisation from possible challenges by external parties across such a difficult and challenging period, could threaten the future of ICANN itself. Therefore it's essential to face some of the perceived difficulties head on.

gTLD Policy development will certainly become more challenging as Constituency segregation is diluted by members having multiple interests, e.g. as applicants, gTLD name holders, brand owners with IP interests, business users, gTLD advisors, consultants, policy advisors, registrars etc.

Issues over ethics and integrity will come to the fore. Increased dialogue by a wider range of players will be required and the existing policy development model will be severely tested. Within the GNSO demands on an already overloaded GNSO Council will increase and it's also anticipated conflicts between what is deemed Council business and what falls to Constituencies to progress separately will need to be addressed.

The ISPCP believes it is time to consider a different approach. It has been two years since the last GNSO Reform process. Procedures are still being debated and the GNSO is still getting to grips with its changed role. Broad stakeholder based WGs have met with mixed results and tensions over 'ownership' of some of those working groups and who has the final word on the output have arisen. In addition the GNSO Council already has an extremely heavy workload and participant burnout remains an issue and hampers progress.

The ISPCP believes it's opportune to consider a new way of working. Whilst recognising the importance and value of the existing structures: GNSO, ccNSO, GAC, ALAC and continuing to support their core missions there is an opportunity to facilitate discussion on topics of common interest on a much broader basis, thereby increasing cooperation and coordination across the complete organisation at an early stage.

To achieve this, the ISPCP propose that consideration should be given to the creation of a new Stakeholder Advisory Platform. This would involve all relevant parties with direct representation from all cross community working groups: Constituencies, ccNSO, ALAC,

GAC, as appropriate. The aim would be to progress issues of common interest in a cohesive manner as opposed to the silo approach through the existing arrangement. This stakeholder platform should be non-voting, work within commonly agreed timelines and aim to provide the Board with consensus advice. Where that cannot be achieved a statement reflecting opposing views and the rationale should be prepared.

An initial set of issues that could be considered for advancement in this manner include cross community views on: Security Stability and Resiliency (SSR), Strategic Plan, Operational Plan and Budget, AoC commitments, ATRT Recommendations, Conflicts of Interest, Consumer Metrics, Outreach, Travel Support.

The ISPCP believes that the early initiation of this approach by the board would facilitate better co-operation and coordination across the existing ICANN structures, remove some of the existing road blocks to progress and expedite results.

It would also effectively reduce the heavy load being tackled separately within the GNSO and ccNSO and allows them to concentrate on appropriate policy work. Such an approach also facilitates greater harmonisation at an early stage of deliberations.

Maintaining the existing structures at this point in time but enabling them to focus purely on key policy aspects that fall within their remit would also allow the later merger of stakeholder groups/constituencies if that is required, or other adjustments to the organisation that only become apparent over time.