Discussion Draft as of 7 April 2020

ICANN68 In-Person Cancellation

Whereas, on 23 June 2018, the ICANN Board approved for ICANN organization to proceed to contracting in support of ICANN68 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2018-06-23-en#1.e). Under the Meetings Strategy, ICANN68 is scheduled as the Policy Forum for 2020.

Whereas, the ICANN Board is responsible for a decision to change an ICANN public meeting location once such a meeting location has been approved for contracting and announced.

Whereas, in December 2019, a new strain of coronavirus, referred to as COVID-19, emerged and on 11 March 2020 was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic. As of 7 April 2020, there are confirmed cases of COVID-19 in 184 countries or territories across the world, with nearly 1,400,000 confirmed cases. Globally, a high number of people are under some form of a "stay at home" or lock-down order, directed to avoid contact with others except to receive essential services such as medical care or to purchase supplies. Schools and offices are closed, gatherings are prohibited, and international travel is largely on pause. We do not know when travel or in-person meetings will be authorized or possible. As it relates to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia has a Movement Control Order in force at least until 14 April 2020 that prohibits meetings such as ICANN68. The duration of the Movement Control Order has already been extended once.

Whereas, as an organization with staff and stakeholders across the globe, in January 2020 ICANN org convened an adaptive crisis management team (A-CMT) in order to assist ICANN org in tracking and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on ICANN's work.

Whereas, ICANN org, through the A-CMT, briefed the Board on the current status of COVID-19 on ICANN's work, including the potential impacts on ICANN68. ICANN org has also consulted with the leadership teams of the various ICANN community structures – our Advisory Committees, Supporting Organizations, Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies - regarding the planning for ICANN68 in the face of the pandemic.

Whereas, the Board recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has already impacted other planned opportunities for the ICANN community to further their work in-person. ICANN67 proceeded as a virtual meeting; the Middle East DNS Forum was canceled; the GDD Summit (planned for May 2020) is postponed; an intersessional meeting for the Nominating Committee has been cancelled; no other intersessional meetings are able to be scheduled at this time. As much as possible, ICANN org has been in communication with the ICANN community on these schedule changes.

Whereas, at this time, it does not appear possible or feasible to convene an in-person ICANN68 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia as planned.

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Whereas, ICANN org successfully moved ICANN67 to a virtual meeting, providing a useful test for the ICANN community on how to plan, schedule and execute an ICANN Public Meeting in a fully virtual setting. In ICANN org's consultations with ICANN's Community Leaders, ICANN org sought the community's feedback about how to use the lessons from ICANN67 to design future virtual meetings as the pandemic might necessitate, taking into consideration the purpose of each Public Meeting.

Whereas, ICANN org reports that, due to current social distancing requirements, ICANN org is unable to execute a virtual meeting from a single location, and that a decentralized execution model might necessitate changes to the format. In addition, and in light of the fact that ICANN68 is intended to be the yearly Policy Forum, the Community Leaders have indicated general support for a flexible, modified virtual meeting format that focuses on cross-community dialogues on key policy topics, supplemented by a program of topical webinars and regular online working meetings scheduled around the key sessions.

Whereas, ICANN org reports to the Board that it continues both its internal operational planning as well as consultation with the community on how to best design a Policy Forum that achieves the intended purpose and that supports the community's ongoing policy advice and development work.

Whereas, the Board understands the import of the face-to-face interactions as provided for at ICANN's Public Meetings.

Resolved (xx), the Board confirms that ICANN68 shall not proceed as an in-person meeting, and directs the ICANN President and CEO, or his designees, to take all steps necessary to cancel the facilities and arrangements made for an in-person meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Resolved (xx), the Board directs the ICANN President and CEO, or his designees, to coordinate with the ICANN community on the best way forward for ICANN68 to meet the expected outcomes of an ICANN Policy Forum, including the furthering of ICANN policy development and advice work, reporting on milestones and community-agreed priorities for the meeting. The ICANN President and CEO is also directed to continue internal operational planning in order to support the delivery of the ICANN68 Policy Forum in a distributed manner to meet the expected outcomes as much as is practically feasible.

Resolved (xx), the Board thanks ICANN org and the ICANN community for their attention to this important issue. The Board also thanks the hosts and venues planned for ICANN68 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for their understanding of the need to cancel the in-person plans for ICANN68. We hope that there is a future time that we will be able to come back and visit your city to host an ICANN Public Meeting.

Rationale for Resolution

Discussion Draft as of 7 April 2020

The Board takes this action today in as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, considered a pandemic by the World Health Organization. While the Board recognizes and upholds the value of face-to-face interactions at ICANN's Public Meetings, and the advancement of ICANN community work that happens at these meetings, we cannot move forward with an in-person meeting at the cost of the health of attendees, ICANN org staff members, and the host country. Just as the Board has previously considered in moving meetings due to the emerging Zika virus, health and safety must be the paramount concern.

At the time of the Board decision, the December 2019 COVID-19 outbreak now stands at nearly 1,400,000 confirmed cases across 184 countries and territories. Each day, there is updated news on the spread of the virus and the worldwide response. Globally, a high number of people are under some form of a "stay at home" or lock-down order, directed to avoid contact with others except to receive essential services such as medical care or to purchase supplies. Schools and offices are closed, gatherings are prohibited and international travel is largely on pause. Across ICANN org, all offices are closed (except for essential items) and personnel are working from home. Those with school-aged children are expected to care for and, in many cases, take on the education of their children. Many within the ICANN community are experiencing these same impacts. Many may also be dealing with infection amongst their family and friends. The pandemic is impacting us all.

As it relates specifically to Malaysia, there is a Movement Control Order in force at least until 14 April 2020 that prohibits meetings such as ICANN68. The duration of the Movement Control Order has already been extended once. Just as we cannot know today if global citizens will be in a position to travel in June 2020, we cannot know if the Movement Control Order will remain in force at the time planned for ICANN68. Taking the global reality into account, there is no way that ICANN can responsibly plan to host an in-person meeting for ICANN68.

After the Board's February 2020 decision canceling the in-person component of ICANN67 and directing ICANN org to proceed with a virtual meeting, a virtual ICANN67 was convened. Many valuable lessons were learned from that experience. The ICANN Board is asking ICANN organization to continue its consultation with ICANN's Community Leaders about how to use the lessons from ICANN67 to design future virtual meetings as the pandemic might necessitate, taking into consideration the purpose of each Public Meeting.

To date, the Community Leaders have indicated general support for a flexible, modified virtual meeting for the ICANN68 Policy Forum format, a schedule that focuses on cross-community dialogues on key policy topics, supplemented by a program of topical webinars and regular online working meetings scheduled around the key sessions. ICANN org itself will need plan differently for how to execute a virtual Policy Forum that achieves the intended purpose and that supports the community's ongoing policy advice and development work. Because of the social distancing requirements as well as the inability to travel, ICANN org will not be able to plan for a centralized hub of operations to deliver on the ICANN community's needs. ICANN org instead is planning on distributed operations for a meeting, which requires significant logistical coordination.

Prior to taking this decision, the Board received briefings from ICANN org, on areas including the impact of COVID-19, conversations with the ICANN community, and operational planning for a distributed meeting.

We thank the ICANN community for its commitment to concluding a successful ICANN67 and for your continued dedication in developing a meaningful and productive ICANN68 Policy Forum even while we cannot meet in person. The ICANN community has shown great leadership already in a global move towards virtual collaboration.

The ICANN Board thanks the host committee as well as our community in the Asia Pacific Region (APAC) who worked tirelessly to host this meeting in Kuala Lumpur. We appreciate their understanding and look forward to returning to the APAC region as soon as we are able.

This action is within ICANN's mission and the public interest, as it is the only path to assure that the work of the ICANN community continues as planned. It is the proper decision on many levels, from not putting ICANN org staff at risk; risking the need to divert the resources and attention of ICANN org to a response to a COVID-19 outbreak amongst ICANN org or the community; to taking a responsible and proper measure to protect against contributing to the global pandemic.

This decision has resource implications that are being quantified. However, the resources needed to support an ICANN68 Policy Forum as can be appropriately designed are expected to be within or below the resources that have already been allocated for ICANN68 within ICANN's budget. This decision has no impact on the security, stability, or resiliency of the Internet's DNS.

This is an organizational administrative decision that does not require public comment.

TITLE:	ANNEX TO BOARD BRIEFING ON ICANN68 KUALA LUMPUR POLICY FORUM
PROPOSED ACTION:	For Board Information Only. No Action to be taken at this time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

ICANN recently conducted a successful virtual meeting for its ICANN67 Community Forum in March 2020. All support and technical staff were in a central location, i.e., the ICANN Los Angeles office. Convening in a central location is no longer possible due to increased travel restrictions and "shelter in place" mandates related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, ICANN68 Policy Forum must conform to an entirely virtual format that will result in certain technical limitations, including:

- No audio streaming since it requires a network operations center, and on-site servers and hardware connected to in-person interpretation booths and AV.

- Technical support staff must operate from remote locations.

- Interpretation can only be provided via a telephone bridge for short periods of time.

On 2 April 2020, ICANN Staff met with SO/AC Leaders to inform the community about these technical limitations and discuss options for a virtual ICANN68.

A summary of the Community call indicates:

- Overall, a constructive and informative call. The community planning group (comprising both community leaders and key representatives) welcomed the opportunity to hear about what ICANN org is thinking and to provide feedback on what a virtual ICANN68 might look like.

- Although two participants suggested postponing the meeting until a face-to-face meeting can take place, most favored consideration of how to conduct a virtual meeting in a way that addresses (as far as possible) the time zone complications and allows for maximum participation in a virtual environment.

- There seemed to be general agreement that ICANN68 need not look like ICANN67, including the duration of the meeting. There was support for a more "deconstructed" meeting, i.e. a longer meeting conducted over two or more weeks, coupled with informational webinars and other smaller sessions.

- Community leaders indicated general support for a flexible, modified virtual meeting for the ICANN68 Policy Forum format, a schedule that focuses on cross-community dialogues on key policy topics, supplemented by a program of topical webinars and regular online working meetings scheduled around the key sessions.

A preliminary list of sessions, including topics postponed from ICANN67 were identified as follows:

- The Domain Name Services Marketplace: Market Dynamics, Business Models, and Commercial Drivers

- The Domain Name System and the Internet of Things: Opportunities, Risks, and Challenges

- DNS Abuse

- Voluntary Practices / Best Practices Beyond Policies and Contractual Requirements

The group also expressed a desire to maintain interaction with the Board and Executive Team by scheduling both an ICANN Public Forum and Q&A with the ICANN Org Executive Team during the meeting.

Similar to the format for the ICANN67 Virtual Community Forum, community leaders agreed that they would continue to run their regular working sessions as they normally do, separate from the formal meeting agenda. This will give them the ability to continue their work under a more flexible schedule without having to adhere to time zone constraints

The SO/AC Leaders' feedback indicated a clear preference for a shorter meeting day, possibly complemented by an extra meeting day (Friday) and on the assumption that

the Virtual Policy Forum can be more flexible in terms of scheduling and duration. There was even support for both Kuala Lumpur or London as the most preferred time zone, although several leaders expressed support for the KL time zone out of consideration for the APAC community and to be consistent with the arrangement for ICANN67. There was also some interest in exploring the possibility of splitting a meeting day into two or more time blocks for greater flexibility.

In an effort to improve on the ICANN67 experience, we are currently testing several different technology platforms for delivering interpretation services for ICANN68. Our goal is to provide two-way interpretation in up to six UN languages for the GAC, ALAC, Board and plenary sessions. Results are promising, but further testing is required.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

ICANN org will need plan differently for how to execute a virtual Policy Forum that achieves the intended purpose and that supports the community's ongoing policy advice and development work. Because of the social-distancing requirements, as well as the inability to travel, ICANN org cannnot leverage a centralized operations hub to deliver on the ICANN community's needs. ICANN org instead is planning on distributed operations for a meeting, which requires significant logistical coordination.

BACKGROUND:

After the Board's February 2020 decision to cancel the in-person component of ICANN67 and directing ICANN org to proceed with a virtual meeting, a virtual ICANN67 was convened with the cooperation of all community groups. Many valuable lessons were learned from that experience.

ICANN org will facilitate consultations with the leadership teams of the various ICANN community structures – our Advisory Committees, Supporting Organizations, Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies - regarding the planning for ICANN68 in the face of the pandemic.

The ICANN community, assisted by ICANN org, will hold regular planning sessions, with the next community call on 15 April to obtain additional feedback and suggestion on developing a meaningful and productive virtual ICANN68 Policy Forum.