

Middle East Space
ICANN 66 Montreal, Canada

Statement

About the Next Steps to Improve the Effectiveness of ICANN's MSM

We, the Middle East (ME) community members participating in the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers ICANN 66 Public Meeting in Montreal, Canada, and attending the Middle East Space session on Wednesday 6 November 2019, discussed the document put forward by ICANN about "The Next Steps to improve the effectiveness of ICANN's Multi-Stakeholder Model (MSM)." We support the work undertaken by the MSM evolution team to develop a work plan that tackles the issues previously identified by the ICANN community as hindering the effective functionality of the model and take this opportunity to contribute to these efforts with the comments found herein. In developing our comments, we considered the issues at hand, the stakeholder groups that could be responsible for the solution and whenever possible the timing and resources required to address the issue.

Issue one – Prioritization of Work

ICANN's planning process addresses the prioritization of work in terms of "go/no go" based on the needs of the five-year strategic plan and the associated goals that ICANN is looking forward to achieving. A more detailed prioritization that breaks down the initial priorities and deals with the tasks and activities carried out by the community to achieve the identified goals is required. Prioritizing ICANN's community activities, for example whether they should be achieved simultaneously or one after the other and elaborating on the benefits of each will allow for a better allocation of resources and budgeting and could help in addressing the issue of volunteers burning out. A committee representing all stakeholder groups with balanced regional and sub-regional representation could be seen responsible for this task. Indeed, one group may point out something not seen by others, in addition, ICANN org contribution to this could be of benefit and we see it as part of the MSM work plan.

Issue two – Precision in Scoping Work

In relation to ICANN's precision in scoping work, input from regional community strategy working groups like the MEAC SWG and Africa SWG, is essential and we note that the strategy working groups align their work with ICANN's five-year strategic plan. Having a process that ensures that the needs of the community are taken into consideration is essential. However, we see this carried by ICANN global stakeholder engagement (GSE) team and by the community through participating in groups like the MEAC SWG and the Africa SWG in addition to participating in developing the implementation plan. Making better use of the existing groups and process in this regard would be required to better scope the work of the community. In relation to the precision in scoping the work of the different working groups a guideline to all stakeholders encouraging them to be as specific as possible when writing the scope of their work and putting guidance in relation to change requests could be helpful, specifically in avoiding scope creep. The PDP 3.0 presents a possible solution that is yet to be seen and evaluated. To that end, we do not currently see precision in scoping the work as part of the MSM work plan. However if the presented solutions fail to address it, then we will consider this issue as part of the work plan.

Issue three – Efficient Use of Resources and Costs

Proper prioritization of the work and precision in its scoping are crucial elements to the efficient use of the resources, especially in relation to the volunteers. Increase in the financial resources allocated to ICANN GSE regional teams, is regarded as necessary to develop capacity-building programs and raise awareness required for more active and capable participation from the region.

Issue four – Roles and Responsibilities and a Holistic view of ICANN

There is a need to review how the three basic elements of ICANN's MSM, the board, the organization and the community work together within their defined roles and responsibilities to achieve ICANN's goals effectively and efficiently. We regard this issue as an essential element of the MSM work plan and contributors to this effort should include all stakeholders.

Issue five – Representation, Inclusivity, Recruitment and Demographics

A sharp term limit to all ICANN community positions is required. Term limits provide an important check on the concentration of power. Some community members dominate their groups by moving from one position to another or chairing several groups at the same time. As an example, term limits could be for two years for two terms, after which the candidate is required to step aside and not take any other leading positions for some period, allowing new members to take the lead. Term limits could be incorporated in the bylaws, allowing for no exceptions to the rule. We note that the existing solutions, GNSO PDP 3.0, the CCWG-Accountability WS2 recommendations and ATRT3 possible recommendations could potentially address this issue. However, due to the importance of the matter as it addresses one of the main three elements of the MSM, the community, we suggest that after the proposed work is complete, an evaluation plan with its relevant KPIs is developed to measure the aggregate effect of all the ongoing efforts in this regard, followed by corrective measures as needed.

Issue six – Culture + Trust + Silos

The ME community recognizes trust as an issue that could hinder cooperation and working together culture. There is a perception that some parts of the community such as end users, the global south and others are undermined. The MSM should be aiming to achieve equity and accountability between all stakeholders. Trust-building is a dynamic process and the proposed existing solutions like global stakeholder engagement, ICANN fellowship, ICANN fellowship mentor, NexGen and NextGen ambassadors all contribute in this regard. However, individual experiences, behaviors and actions can at any time serve as a turning point in developing trust, affecting one of ICANN's MSM core elements. We therefore, see that developing trust should be on the MSM work plan.

Issue seven – Complexity

Addressing the issue of complexity is crucial to the development of work within the ICANN community, ensuring diversity and inclusivity. Though existing activities like MEAC-SIG and ME GNSO training contribute to the solution, more planned workshops and capacity building is essential for wide informed participation. To that end, we believe the issue of complexity should be part of the MSM work plan in order to be addressed at the strategic level.

Issue eight – Consensus

The work developed by the GNSO PDP 3.0 implementation plan could successfully tackle this issue, therefore we do not see this issue as part of the work plan. We note that activities like the ME DNS forum; MEAC-SIG and MEAC SWG among other regional activities provide a good platform for the community to interact, exchange information and sets the stage to coming to consensus on many of the discussed issues. However, a common definition and understanding of consensus rules is required. Competing interests among stakeholders create inequality; some stakeholders like those representing businesses and governments have the time and means to dedicate their effort to the work of the community, while other groups like end users need to allocate the resources and time at their own expenses, affecting their actual presence and participation. Focusing on consensus among stakeholders rather than participants could be a solution to this issue.

Having a well-defined MSM with clear working methods and processes ensures that ICANN MSM continues to serve the global public interest.