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Governmental Advisory Committee

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Governmental Advisory Committee Input Regarding ICANN Public Meeting Strategy Survey

Introduction

The ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) welcomes the opportunity to share committee member responses to questions regarding future planning for ICANN public meetings. This short document summarizes aggregated GAC Member responses to the recent ICANN Public Meeting Strategy Survey and shares other general thoughts shared by GAC Members regarding the future of ICANN public meetings.

GAC Member comments during ICANN69 and responses from 24 GAC Members to the ICANN org survey which closed on 5 November 2020 indicate that over the past three “virtual” meetings the committee itself seems to have reached a productive balance between GAC workload, session obligations and substantive content during the GAC’s own virtual public meetings. While pleased with the GAC’s response to the challenges presented by meeting in a “virtual” environment during ICANN67, ICANN68 and ICANN69, GAC members also acknowledge that the committee and, more broadly the ICANN org, should consider how future meetings are organized, planned and implemented for the remainder of and after the challenging COVID-19 pandemic is over.

The GAC appreciates the time and attention that the ICANN org staff have devoted to seeking community views on this matter and considers that feedback from all community groups should be factored into future public meeting plans.

GAC Responses to the Recent Survey

The ICANN Meetings Team has already done a creditable job summarizing many of the aggregated community responses to the ICANN Public meetings Strategy Survey. A number of notable trends among GAC Member responses to the survey are noted here including:

- 79% of GAC survey respondents indicated that the current three meeting annual structure is effective.
- 75% of GAC survey respondents indicated support for three public meetings a year.
- The majority of GAC survey respondents want to see improvements in networking and policy development work at public meetings.
- Only 50% of GAC survey respondents find that the virtual meeting format is effective in helping them accomplish their meeting goals.
- 42% of GAC survey respondents indicated that networking during virtual meetings can be improved.

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- 83% of GAC survey respondents indicated that the ICANN69 schedule presented the correct number of sessions (for the GAC this represents an apparent comfort zone of about 13 GAC public sessions per meeting).
- 58% of GAC survey respondents support 60-minute sessions.
- There was no apparent consensus among GAC survey respondents regarding time zone settings for virtual ICANN public meetings.

GAC Member Views on Meeting Strategies Expressed During ICANN69

The GAC conducted a Wrap-Up session at the end of the ICANN69 meeting. Among a number of topics, the session focused on eliciting GAC member feedback on the ICANN69 meeting and sought participant views on the various questions presented in the open Public Meeting Strategy Survey. This information is being presented separately from the actual survey responses themselves but should be considered within the overall context of community feedback.

GAC Feedback on Future ICANN Public Meetings

On 22 November 2020, during the GAC Wrap-Up session for ICANN69, the GAC Chair led session participants on a question-by-question review of a current ICANN org survey regarding the future of ICANN public Meetings. A wide variety of GAC views were expressed by session attendees including:

- Favorable comments about continuing to hold three public meetings per year; but also giving consideration to the fact that more substantive GAC work now seems to take place outside the face-to-face meetings. It was noted that this more recent work style may need to be reflected in how ICANN (or the GAC) now conducts its business - including the goals for meeting at any time and, if so, how often the community needs to meet face-to-face or virtually;
- A need to confirm community expectations for public meetings - recognizing there may be different goals for different communities;
- A focused one week of meeting should be sufficient;
- There is appreciation for unconflicted session time that enables GAC members to attend sessions conducted by other communities;
- The virtual meeting format has important shortcomings re consensus-building, networking, and spontaneous “meet-ups” and presents special challenges for on-boarding newcomers;
- It is unfortunate that a single time-zone approach is not possible for all community participants, but staff should make efforts to identify common times that present reasonable accommodations for as many as possible - even if that means shorter meeting days.

GAC Feedback on Future GAC Meetings During ICANN Public Meetings

Also, during the ICANN69 Wrap-Up session, the GAC Chair asked GAC delegates about their views of future GAC meetings during these challenging times and the impact virtual meetings could

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have regarding development of GAC consensus advice for the Board. Among the many thoughts shared were the following views:

- One GAC working week of around four hours of sessions a day should be enough to conduct GAC work;
- The GAC has recently enjoyed a good work environment - there were no emergencies at ICANN68 or 69, but the GAC may need to consider creating new rules in the future regarding the remote development of GAC consensus advice on main community work streams like new gTLD Subsequent procedures;
- While the “door” is open to GAC consensus advice during virtual meetings, these meetings bring challenges. The committee should be cautious on drafting GAC consensus advice in advance (i.e., time pressure, extra intersessional work, longer meetings, etc.);
- Perhaps, in certain cases, GAC consensus advice discussions could start before an ICANN meeting (e.g., circulating pre-warnings to the whole GAC and sharing any advice proposals a certain number of days prior to a GAC session). Some topics may even require this consideration at ICANN70.

Closing

Members of the GAC recognize that the committee individually and the ICANN organization as a whole have met the initial challenges of operating effectively in the virtual meeting environment prompted by the global health pandemic. However, participants recognize that improvements can be made where possible and that planning for a transition back to face to face meetings is important. It appears that some issues, like time zone management in a virtual environment will remain challenging.

Members of the GAC Leadership team will participate in future community discussions regarding future strategies for ICANN public meetings during the remainder of this global health emergency and after the pandemic has been resolved. The GAC looks forward to hearing the views of other community groups on this important topic and looks forward to providing further input as these discussions lead to future meeting planning proposals – both virtual and in-person.

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