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## GAC Underserved Regions Working Group (USRWG) Plenary Meeting

### Session 3.0

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#### Session Objective

The GAC USR WG will meet in plenary to provide an update to the GAC Members.

#### Background

The GAC Underserved Regions Working Group (USR WG) was created to focus on regions that are under-served by the Domain Name System (DNS) industry, least developed economies and small island developing states. A particular focus is made on under-served economies from the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions.

The overall objective of the Working Group is to empower and enable GAC members in :

- 1) Developing relationships and building a meaningful network with other GAC members, the ICANN community as well as with their regional technical communities, industries and civil societies;
- 2) Building knowledge of ICANN processes to participate more effectively and meaningfully within the GAC and in ICANN policy development processes, including issues of concern and of national interest;
- 3) Enhancing the understanding, growth and development of the domain name industry (DNS), especially in underserved regions; and

The work of the USR WG has been carried out by its Co-Chairs, Pua Hunter (Cook Islands) and Karel Douglas (Trinidad and Tobago) along with Luisa Paez and Rita Houkayem's support (Canada).

## Agenda and Outcomes

The agenda for the meeting on Saturday 2 November from 13:30 to 14:30 is as follows:

### 1. FY20 GAC Capacity Building Workshops

- Bahrain Workshop (September 2019)
  - The Government Engagement (GE) Team will provide an update on the workshop (themes discussed, feedback and next steps)
- ICANN67 (March 2020)
- Pacific workshop (April 2020 during the Annual General Meeting of the Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association)
- ICANN68 (June 2020)

### 2. New gTLDs Subsequent Rounds

- GAC Focal Group
  - Mandate
  - Areas of GAC interest
- GAC USR WG potential concerns

The Working Group will discuss potential future participation in the GAC Focal Group on Subsequent Rounds.

### 3. Work plan actions stocktaking

- Prioritization of short term actions
- Next steps (intersessional work until ICANN67)

The Working Group will start prioritizing and discussing how best to implement its work plan actions.

## Relevant Developments

### GAC and New gTLDs Subsequent Procedures

The GNSO Subsequent Procedures Working Group Policy Development Process (PDP) focuses on considering the 2012 round policy and determining what changes might need to be made to the original GNSO recommendations from 2007, which resulted in the Applicant Guidebook and the 2012 round of the new gTLD Program.

Following ICANN64, the GAC launched a focal group to build capacity, assist GAC members navigate the GNSO Subsequent Procedures Working Group Policy Development Process (PDP) and

coordinate the GAC's timely input into the final deliberations of the New Generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process (PDP) Working Group. This also includes tracking the initial recommendations on the Competition, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Choice (CCT) Review. The GAC's main topics of interest cover areas such as the new gTLD's application process, requirements, evaluation, objections, and string contention. A [scorecard on the status of substantive areas of interest to the GAC](#) has been created to help prioritize and guide the work of the GAC Focal Group.

The focal group met for the first time during ICANN65 and started work on building the capacity of GAC members to navigate the interrelated policy development and implementation discussions on future rounds of New gTLDs.

At ICANN66, the Focal Group will brief the GAC on its deliberations and discussions.

- Why is this matter important to GAC Underserved Regions Working Group Members?

1. Following 1st Round (2012) and the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) (2011), the GAC dealt with numerous issues related to new gTLDs which some directly impacted underserved regions (i.e .africa, .islam, .halal).
2. Involvement of underserved regions relating to new gTLDs was limited
3. High importance for underserved regions to be informed and aware of the process pertaining to new gTLDs in order to:
  - a. Develop relevant expertise in order to play an active role at a local level within their governments and their DNS community
  - b. Manage to mitigate situations related to local public policies impacted new gTLDs strings

- What topics may be considered by the GAC underserved regions Working Group Members?

This briefing is not intended to tell GAC Underserved Regions Working Group Members what topics are of importance to their region, as this is a matter only they can respond to.

However, this briefing is a preliminary document created to initiate GAC USRWG Members' understanding of the situation and where they can potentially play an active role within the GAC on matters related to new gTLDs in their respective regions.

As mentioned above, the GAC Focal Group created a [scorecard on the status of substantive areas of interest to the GAC](#) to help prioritize and guide the work of the group including the [Final CCT Recommendations with Board Action](#) (taking stock of the first round from a competition, consumer trust, and consumer choice perspective).

Below is a list of topics identified on the preliminary GAC scorecard that GAC USR WG Members may wish to consider for future discussions.

### **Process related issues**

For issues related to process, GAC Members may look at the [GAC scorecard on Subsequent Rounds](#).

## Subsequent Rounds of New gTLDs: Reviews, Policy Development and Prerequisites

- Policy Development Process:
- Future Releases of New gTLDs (Timing and Prerequisites)

## New gTLD Applications Process

- Clarity and Predictability of Application Process
- Freedom of Expression
- TLD Categories (or Types)
- Community-Based Applications

## Potential policy related issues

- New gTLD Applications Requirements
  - **Applicant Support and Participation of Underserved Regions:** The Applicant Support Program (ASP) was an initiative developed in addition to the new gTLD Program. The Applicant Support Program assists potential new gTLD applicants seeking both financial and non-financial support. There are three ways to participate in this program (Access to pro bono services for startup gTLD registries, Financial assistance and The Applicant Support Fund).
  - **Closed Generic TLDs:** A "generic string" means a string consisting of a word or term that denominates or describes a general class of goods, services, groups, organizations or things (e.g. .book, .bank, .weather etc.). A closed generic refers to applications where the applicant would impose restrictive eligibility criteria to limit registrations at the second level exclusively to a single person, entity or group of affiliate. "For strings representing generic terms, exclusive registry access should serve a public interest goal" (GAC Beijing Advice)<sup>1</sup>
  - **Reserved Names:** Names that cannot be applied as a string. The application system will recognize the Reserved Names and will not allow the application to be submitted.
- New gTLD Applications Requirements - Safeguards and Public Interest Commitments
  - **Safeguards (Highly regulated sectors, Registration Restrictions, DNS Abuse):** ICANN's New gTLD Program (2008 to today) has led to the introductions of over 1,000 new gTLDs in the root of the DNS. In the course of policy development, policy implementation, and operation of the program, members of the ICANN Community, including the GAC and GAC Members, have raised a range of concerns regarding possible negative impacts.
  - **Public Interest Commitments (PICs):** were created during the processing of applications in the 2012 Rounds of New gTLDs, as a contractual mechanism between ICANN and Registry Operators, to implement various GAC advice related to public policy issues that emerged once applications were revealed. ICANN Board proposed a new Specification 11 which became the vehicle for new contractual provisions that were not originally envisioned in the base Registry Agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-new-gtld-2015-06-21-en#2.a> Board response to the GAC Advice.

- claiming that a Registry may not be complying with one or more of its Public Interest Commitments (PICs) per Specification 11 of its [Registry Agreement](#) with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
- **Global Public Interest:** Mechanisms to be employed to serve the public interest, in addition to Public Interest Commitments (PICs).
- New gTLD Applications Evaluation, Objections and String Contention
  - **GAC Early Warnings and GAC Advice:** GAC Early Warning provided earliest possible notice of potential public policy concern and served the interests of both applicants and the GAC should be an integral part of any future rounds. The GAC is open to increasing transparency and fairness of GAC Early Warning and GAC Advice, including giving applicants an opportunity for direct dialogue with the GAC. The GAC does not consider that the PDP should make recommendations on GAC activities which are carried out in accordance with the ICANN Bylaws and the GAC's internal procedures.
  - **String Similarity:** a proposed gTLD string creates a probability of user confusion due to similarity with any reserved name, any existing TLD, any requested IDN ccTLD, or any new gTLD string applied for in the current application round.
  - **Auctions Procedures:** An auction of two or more applications within a contention set. The auctioneer successively increases the prices associated with the applications within the contention set, and the respective applicants indicate their willingness to pay these prices. As the prices rise, applicants will successively choose to exit from the auction.

## Key Reference Documents

[GAC Focal Group Page](#) (includes material on certain substantive areas relating to Subsequent Rounds)

## Glossary

<https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/glossary>

**New gTLD Program:** The New gTLD Program is an initiative coordinated by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), that is enabling the largest expansion of the domain name system. Via the introduction of new top-level domains (TLDs), the program aims to enhance innovation, competition and consumer choice.

**Applicant Guidebook (AGB):** The Applicant Guidebook is an ICANN guidebook describing the entire process of applying for new gTLDs in the New gTLD Program.

**Contention set:** A group of applications containing identical or similar applied-for gTLD strings.

**Early Warning:** A notice issued by individual GAC members concerning a gTLD application indicating that the application is seen as potentially sensitive or problematic by one or more governments.

## Document Administration

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