ICANN | GAC
Governmental Advisory Committee

82 | COMMUNITY FORUM

GAC Operating Matters

Session #5

Session Objective

Depending on the status of various work efforts in the GAC, from time-to-time the committee holds a session during a public meeting to review, discuss and make decisions on GAC operational matters. These matters can range from reviews of specific committee processes, to leadership election announcements, to work planning and prioritization or to improvements to how the committee conducts its work.

For ICANN82, this "operating matters" session will be devoted to discussion of proposals made by the ICANN Chair at ICANN81 regarding the timing of GAC leadership elections, the terms/tenures of the GAC Chair and Vice Chairs and a committee decision whether to proceed with an effort to update the GAC Operating Principles to effect the proposed changes.

Recent Developments

Members of the GAC convened by Zoom on 18 February 2025 to discuss options that the committee might pursue to extend the term of the GAC Chair and Vice Chairs and to explore aligning the terms of the GAC leadership with the terms of the ICANN Board of Directors (as the GAC Chair traditionally serves as a non-voting liaison to the ICANN Board).

Call attendees discussed a number of potential courses of action with an eye toward narrowing those options to enable productive discussions and a potential decision on the matters at ICANN82 in Seattle.

Committee Discussions:

[*This section reproduces portions of the call summary shared via email by GAC Support staff with the committee on 21 February 2025*]

The GAC Chair reiterated the discussion proposal he made to the GAC at ICANN81 regarding the value of extending the term or term limits of the both the GAC Chair and GAC Vice Chair positions and aligning GAC election timing to mirror the onboarding of ICANN Board Members. He explained that it took time for community leaders to come up to speed and feel productive in their roles. He posited that once that expertise was achieved that it would be beneficial to the committee if experienced leaders could serve for longer periods and leverage their knowledge and experience.

A. Alignment of GAC Leadership Elections with ICANN Board Onboarding

The GAC Chair explained the value of aligning the GAC leadership terms (particularly that of the GAC Chair, with the ICANN Board's yearly election/onboarding cycle). He explained that under Operating Principle #31 of the current GAC Operating Principles, the Chair and Vice Chair terms do not commence until almost four months after new Board members are officially seated at the ICANN Annual General Meeting. Because of that "misalignment", the incoming GAC Chair (who serves as a Board member in a non-voting liaison capacity) cannot take advantage of the normal cycle of Board Member "on-boarding". Aligning the timing of GAC election results with the Board "onboarding" process would support and increase the effectiveness of the GAC Chair serving that Board liaison role.

Oral and Zoom chat discussion among call attendees seemed to demonstrate a general consensus to have the committee consider amending the timing of annual GAC leadership elections to synchronize the GAC election cycle with the Board on-boarding cycle at the ICANN Annual General Meeting. Attendee consensus supported amending GAC Operating Principle #31 to move the GAC Leadership election cycle forward by one meeting so that elections would be concluded during the second GAC public meeting of the calendar year and thereby allow for the GAC Chair (in the role on non-voting Board liaison) to be seated along with other Board Members at the ICANN Annual General Meeting.

B. Options for Extension of Service (Terms and Time Limits) for GAC Chair and Vice Chairs

The GAC Chair reiterated the proposal he made to the GAC at ICANN81 regarding the value of extending the term length and/or term limits of both the GAC Chair and GAC Vice Chair positions. He explained that from his personal experience, the individual terms of the Chair and Vice Chairs (currently described in GAC Operating Principle 21) are too short – given the extensive time it takes for leaders to learn the issues and become comfortable in their role.

He posited that once leadership expertise has been achieved, it would be beneficial to the committee for those experienced leaders to have the ability and option to serve for longer periods and leverage their knowledge and experience.

At the request of the GAC Chair, the GAC Support staff summarized several options (previously shared both at ICANN81 and intersessionally) for amending the GAC Operating Principles and potentially extending the number or length of the terms of the GAC Chair and the GAC Chair positions. The options reviewed included:

> *i. Chair tenure consecutive term-limit options:*

Option 1: No change – 2 consecutive terms, 2 years each term (total – 4 consecutive years)
Option 2: Longer terms – 2 consecutive terms, 3 years each term (total – 6 consecutive years)
Option 3: Longer single term – 1 term, 3 years (total – 3 consecutive years)
Option 4: More terms – 3 consecutive terms, 2 years each (total – 6 consecutive years)

ii. Vice chair tenure consecutive term-limit options:

Option 5: No change – 2 consecutive terms, 1 year each (total – 2 consecutive years)
Option 6: More terms – 3 consecutive terms, 1 year each (total – 3 consecutive years)
Option 7: Longer terms – 2 terms, 2 years each (total – 4 consecutive years)

Various call attendees expressed their views about the options presented. The only option that received no vocal support was Option 3. Otherwise, positive comments were shared at least once for every other option presented, sometimes in various combinations. It seemed that comments seemed to settle around three general themes or potential approaches going forward.

Firstly, there was support for **longer terms** of office. This approach seemed to be favored by the GAC Chair's expressed interest in Options 2 and 7 - maintaining the current two consecutive terms, but encouraging both GAC Chair and Vice Chair terms to be increased by one year (to 3 and 2 years respectively).

Secondly, there seemed to be support favoring **more terms** (Options 4 and 6) where the current term lengths would remain, but that the Chair or Vice Chairs could have the option of seeking a third consecutive term).

Thirdly, some comments seemed to favor not the **status quo** – not making any changes, recognizing that the current operating principles serve to encourage more frequent individual opportunities to step forward to offer leadership service to the committee. It was also noted that longer terms night actually dissuade volunteers from stepping forward because they may not be able to make such long commitments to the committee.

C. Staggering of Terms:

Although not originally proposed, some call attendees expressed interest in determining a process that would serve to keep the terms of the GAC Chair and Vice Chairs "staggered" so that there would always be experienced individuals on the leadership team. It was noted that the staggering of terms is not presently mandated in the Operating Principles but has materialized more from previous Operating Principle amendments that impacted the timing of various past elections. There seemed to be a willingness among call attendees to further explore how this could be achieved in a more intentional manner.

D. Process:

Call attendees also spent time clarifying the relative flexibility and timing of the process for amending the GAC Operating Principles.

The text of Operating Principle 53 was shared and discussed:

GAC Operating Principle 53:

> *A Member or Members may move, at a meeting, for these Operating Principles to be open to revision. If so moved, the Chair shall call for the movement to be seconded. If so seconded, then the Chair shall call for a vote to support the resolution. The deciding vote may be by ballot, by the raising of hands, by roll call, or by using an online voting mechanism and shall constitute a simple majority of the Members who are present at the meeting at which it was moved for these Operating Principles to be revised. Physical presence at the meetings is required for eligibility to vote. If so resolved in favour of a revision of these Operating Principles, then the proposal shall sit for consultation for a period of sixty (60) days. At the next meeting following the sixty days, the Chair shall call for a vote for or against the proposal. The deciding vote may be taken by ballot, by the raising of cards hands, by roll call, or by using an online voting mechanism and shall be a simple majority of the Members who are present at the meeting at which the vote takes place. Physical presence at the meetings is required for eligibility to vote.*

It was clarified that a decision did need to be taken during ICANN82 to determine if there was support for amending any of the GAC Operating Principles (OP#21 or OP#31) before the start of the 2025 leadership election cycle begins at the end of the ICANN83 meeting in June 2025. The GAC Chair confirmed that he would seek to provide a clear resolution to the committee at ICANN82 so that a determination could be made whether Members would be supportive of a change to the election timing and/or changes to the tenures of the GAC Chair and Vice Chairs. It was clarified that any changes to be made would not apply to the terms of any GAC leaders scheduled to commence at the end of GAC's ICANN82 meeting.

Call attendees encouraged any "moving" Members in Seattle to consider breaking any potential amendment motions into at least two separate motions – one covering the election alignment proposal and a second covering changes in GAC Leadership terms.

Session Agenda

It was hoped that upon sharing a summary of the 18 February call with GAC Members that discussions of the topic would continue dialogue via the GAC email list. Such input was encouraged in hopes that committee discussions in Seattle would be more effective and efficient.

Should a resolution or resolutions to revise the leadership tenures and adjust the annual election timing be moved and seconded during the GAC Plenary Session Number 5 on 8 March 2025, committee members in attendance at ICANN82 will be asked to indicate their support to amend (or not amend) Operating Principles 21 and 31 accordingly.

Subsequent to that committee decision (minimum of 60 days after ICANN82), the GAC could then consider finalizing any agreed upon revisions to the GAC Operating Principles during the ICANN83 – Prague meeting. If no amendments are agreed to at ICANN82, then no immediate additional process actions will be necessary.

Time permitting, other operating matter topics may be raised by committee leadership or membership.

Key Reference Resources

- Current GAC Operating Principles
- Recording of Committee Discussion of Potential Election Timing and Chair/Vice Chair Tenure Changes - https://tinyurl.com/5n8wsbw4 or this link - https://icann.zoom.us/rec/play/tgI_24af9UY78PQqO5lcz7l8_mcE4iA7WfKZmUnC5X1SlI3b1d27HIXyLpgUSD5rX7fF0FvBGeqYTgUB.7L3yTFdv6NNFWXuQ?autoplay=true&startTime=1739883616000 .

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