
GAC Leadership and Operations Update

Session 10

Session Objective

From time to time, the GAC holds sessions during ICANN Public Meetings to review, discuss, and make decisions on GAC operational matters, including committee processes, work planning, or to improvements to how the committee conducts its work.

For ICANN86, this “operating matters” session will focus on an update on the progress of the GAC Annual Plan, a discussion about the GAC’s participation in the Nominating Committee, a discussion on the proposed approach for the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) and a proposal for a GAC Capacity Development Working Group.

Leadership Proposal for GAC Action

1. Review progress on the GAC Annual Plan (including an update on the 2026 GAC Leadership Retreat in Brussels)
2. Discuss the GAC’s participation in the Nominating Committee (NomCom)
3. Discuss a proposed approach to the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIP)
4. Review of a proposal for a GAC Capacity Development Working Group

Current Status and Recent Developments

- **Review progress on the GAC Annual Plan**

As input for the GAC Leadership Retreat that took place in April 2026, the GAC Topic Leads provided an update on progress of each of the Expected Outcomes in the [GAC Annual Plan 2025/2026](#). This enabled the identification of specific pain points which were discussed by the GAC Leadership towards identifying action which could be take to unlock progress of relevant work.

The Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Tracker is reproduced in Annex to this briefing and provides detailed status information for all the Expected Outcomes for 2025/2026 for each of the 9 GAC Strategic Objectives.

- **2026 GAC Leadership Retreat**

The GAC Leadership held a retreat in Brussels on 14-16 April 2026 which focused on reviewing progress on the activities noted in the GAC Annual Plan, including discussions about how to increase the GAC's effectiveness in ICANN and Internet Governance, as well as moving the needle on specific expected outcomes detailed in the Plan. During ICANN86, the GAC Leadership will share highlights from these discussions and decisions.

- **GAC Participation in the Nominating Committee**

ICANN's Nominating Committee (NomCom) selects individuals for key ICANN leadership positions, including ICANN Board members. Under the ICANN Bylaws, the GAC may appoint a voting delegate to participate in NomCom deliberations, although this role has not been actively filled in recent years.

The delegate role operates within NomCom's independent and confidential processes. Consistent with NomCom operating principles, delegates act in the interests of the global Internet community and do not serve in a representational capacity on behalf of their appointing organizations. In practice, the GAC has more recently engaged through submissions outlining candidate criteria, emphasizing public policy expertise, government experience, public interest considerations, and geographic diversity.

The ICANN86 discussion provides an opportunity to consider whether the GAC should appoint a delegate to the NomCom and, if so, what expectations and qualifications should apply to the role.

- **Continuous Improvement Framework (CIP): Discussion of Proposed Approach for the GAC**

The Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) was developed based on recommendations from the Third Accountability and Transparency Review (ATRT3) that the ICANN Board approved. Designed as a replacement for the periodic Bylaws-mandated Organizational Reviews, the aim of the CIP is to establish a continuous and tailored approach to assessing and improving the effectiveness of ICANN's Supporting Organizations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), and the Nominating Committee. The framework follows a three-year cycle of assessment, implementation, and reporting against five common principles related to purpose, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and collaboration.

At the request of GAC leadership, staff has prepared a proposed approach for the GAC's first CIP cycle. The staff proposal is intended as a lightweight approach that leverages existing work under the GAC Strategic and Annual Plans while minimizing additional workload. The ICANN86 discussion will provide an opportunity for the GAC to consider the proposed approach and next steps for implementation.

- **GAC Capacity Development Working Group Proposal**

The GAC Capacity Development Working Group proposal emerged from recent GAC Leadership discussions and builds on previous approaches to capacity development planning. The draft proposal has been circulated to the GAC mailing list for review and feedback ahead of the ICANN86 Meeting, where the topic is expected to be discussed further under Session 10: GAC Leadership and Operations Updates, with a view to gathering community input and exploring possible convergence on next steps.

The document notes that the GAC is facing increasing capacity development needs, driven by evolving ICANN policy work, developments in the digital ecosystem, and the continuous rotation of GAC representatives. At the same time, it observes that current efforts remain somewhat fragmented, with responsibilities spread across different groups and activities not always strategically coordinated.

To address these challenges, the draft proposal explores the possible establishment of a dedicated Capacity Development Working Group (CDWG), which could serve as a coordinating mechanism for GAC capacity development activities. The intention would not be to replace the work of existing Working Groups or Topic Leads, but rather to help coordinate efforts across the committee. Other groups, including the USRWG, would continue identifying needs and priorities in their respective areas, while the CDWG could help translate those needs into more structured, timely, and sustainable capacity development activities.

The proposal also outlines a number of possible guiding principles for future capacity development efforts, including the importance of clearly defined learning objectives, alignment with ongoing GAC and ICANN policy work, greater use of online and modular formats where appropriate, and approaches that accommodate both in-person and remote participation.

In addition, the draft proposal outlines potential areas of responsibility for the CDWG, such as maintaining a longer-term capacity development curriculum, developing onboarding materials for new representatives, identifying and prioritizing learning needs, coordinating with ICANN org, and assessing effectiveness through feedback and continuous improvement mechanisms.

The document further includes draft Terms of Reference for discussion, covering possible composition, working modalities, and deliverables for the Working Group. Examples mentioned in the proposal include supporting longer-term planning for capacity development activities, proposing capacity development sessions ahead of ICANN meetings, and maintaining a centralized repository of materials and onboarding resources on the GAC website.

Key Reference Resources

- [GAC Annual Plan 2025/2026](#)
- [GAC Criteria for Submission to the 2026 ICANN Nominating Committee](#)
- [GAC Capacity Development Working Group Proposal](#)

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