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ICANN85 Community Forum, 07-12 March 2026

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1. MEETING ATTENDANCE & MEMBERSHIP

71 GAC Members and 9 Observers attended the meeting.

GAC membership currently stands at 184 Member States and Territories, and 41 Observer Organizations. A list of ICANN85 GAC meeting Member and Observer attendees is provided in [Attachment 1 - ICANN85 Community Forum - GAC ATTENDEES LIST](#).

The ICANN85 GAC Communiqué is published on the GAC website at: <https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann85-mumbai-communique>.

Presentations used by speakers during the meeting and supporting briefings prepared for the GAC can be accessed from the GAC website at: <https://gac.icann.org/agendas/icann85-mumbai-agenda>.

Full transcripts for each meeting session are to be made available from the [ICANN85 Public Meeting website](#), via the relevant agenda items on the GAC's website agenda page listed above.

1.1. Opening Plenary Session

The GAC Chair officially welcomed in-person and remote attendees to the GAC Public Meeting in conjunction with the ICANN85 Community Forum. He highlighted particular aspects of the meeting week agenda and support staff shared logistical information to help all attendees participate effectively during the meeting week. The GAC Chair was joined by the Indian government's representative to the GAC who offered opening welcome remarks to attendees.

The Chair highlighted a number of substantive and operational matters that the committee is currently addressing and identified several work efforts that will attract committee attention in the coming months. He thanked committee vice chairs who are expected to step-down after the Community Forum and welcomed incoming new committee vice chairs to the GAC Leadership team (to be seated after ICANN85)

The committee engaged in the traditional "tour de table" ceremony during which all GAC delegates attended in-person and virtually introduced themselves.

2. PUBLIC POLICY AND SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

2.1. New gTLDs Next Round

The GAC Vice-Chair opened the session, noting that the discussion would cover program timelines, application system readiness, available resources, and a dedicated exchange on the GAC Early Warnings process.

ICANN org provided an overview of key milestones, confirming that the application window will open on 30 April 2026 for 15 weeks, closing on 12 August 2026. Following an administrative processing period, the reveal of applications is expected around October 2026, with String Confirmation Day marking the start of the community input period, including GAC Early Warnings. Timelines remain dependent on the number of applications received, and application processing is expected to extend over several years.

ICANN org demonstrated the Top-Level Domain Application Management System (TAMS), outlining applicant-facing functionalities such as dashboard navigation, task management, and application submission workflows. Staff clarified that GAC members will not use TAMS but will instead rely on a public interface to review applications following String Confirmation Day. This interface is expected to include search, filtering, and data export capabilities, although some features remain under development.

The presentation also outlined the main application types, including general applications, IDNs and variants, geographic names, reserved names, .brand TLDs, and community applications. ICANN org highlighted that certain categories, such as geographic and community applications, involve additional requirements and evaluation processes of particular relevance to GAC review.

ICANN org further highlighted available preparation resources, including the Applicant Guidebook as the authoritative reference, topic overviews, and recorded webinars. Members were encouraged to make use of these materials to support readiness and internal coordination.

In its implementation update, ICANN org indicated that most critical path items are complete or on track. System development has been finalized, with testing ongoing to ensure reliability and security. Progress was also noted in contracting evaluation providers. With respect to the Applicant Support Program (ASP), ICANN org reported 75 applications and noted ongoing discussions on potential additional funding.

GAC members raised a number of questions and observations. Members welcomed the planned data export functionality and emphasized the importance of machine-readable access to application data. Questions were also raised regarding applicant support, with ICANN org indicating that support models, including possible 24/7 availability during key periods, are under consideration.

Members reiterated concerns from the 2012 round, particularly regarding Community Priority Evaluation (CPE), and stressed the importance of robust and transparent evaluation processes.

ICANN org confirmed that vendor selection criteria had been developed with the Implementation Review Team and that additional evaluation guidance will be published for public comment. Members also requested clearer guidance on objection procedures, noting their relevance alongside Early Warnings.

The GAC then discussed the draft GAC Early Warnings process document. GAC leadership recalled that the draft had been circulated and refined following ICANN84 and outlined that it establishes internal procedures for submission, validation, and content requirements. It was emphasized that Early Warnings are non-binding, do not require GAC consensus, and may be submitted by any GAC member or observer.

Members discussed practical aspects of implementation, noting that Early Warnings may address a broad range of concerns, including legal, security, cultural, and public policy considerations. Clarifications were provided on timing, with the 104-day submission period beginning on String Confirmation Day, and members were encouraged to submit Early Warnings early within that window.

Further discussion addressed how to handle multiple applications for the same string. While no definitive approach was established, it was noted that the Applicant Guidebook refers to applications rather than strings, suggesting submissions may need to be made per application. Members also highlighted the limited scope of geographic name protections and encouraged vigilance in identifying potential issues.

GAC members welcomed the progress made on the draft and emphasized the importance of finalizing the process promptly to support readiness. Leadership encouraged members to provide any remaining comments, noting that the document would be updated and recirculated with a view to reaching consensus in the near term.

The session concluded with appreciation to ICANN org and GAC members for the exchange. The GAC underscored the importance of continued preparation, coordination, and timely finalization of internal processes ahead of the application window.

Action Point(s):

- **GAC Support Staff** to update and recirculate the GAC Early Warnings process document, incorporating remaining comments and seeking consensus for finalization.
- **GAC Leadership** and **Support Staff** to consider organizing an intersessional exchange to support GAC readiness and share preparation approaches.

2.2. WHOIS and Registration Data Issues

This GAC plenary session covered three topics related to registration data policy at ICANN:

1) Privacy/Proxy Services Accreditation; 2) Urgent Requests for Disclosure of Registration Data and Law Enforcement Authentication; 3) Next Steps for the Registration Data Request Service (RDRS) and the Standardized System for Access/Disclosure of Registration Data (SSAD) recommendations.

GAC discussions of **Privacy/Proxy Services** have mostly focused on the need for these services, upon request for disclosure of non-public registration data, to provide the contact information of the underlying registrant or domain holder who makes use of these services. This has become increasingly relevant for requestors of registration data given that these services have become very common, as discussed previously by the GAC, in particular in relation to the Registration Data Request Service (RDDS) and its usage data.

In parallel to these discussions, the GAC has been represented in the Privacy/Proxy Services Accreditation (PPSAI) Implementation Review Team (IRT) which is tasked with developing contractual language (ICANN Consensus Policy) to implement an accreditation model that is consistent with the 2016 GNSO Policy Recommendations. This IRT was originally convened in 2016, and suspended in 2019 due to overlapping issues with ongoing work in the GNSO's Expedited Policy Development Process (EPDP) on the Temporary Specification, in light of the work to address the European Union General Data Protection Regulation. The IRT was reconvened in 2024 and has now cleared a number of procedural steps which sought to clarify interpretation of the 2016 GNSO policy recommendations adopted by the ICANN Board in light of ICANN policy and Data Privacy law developments since then. Several accreditation models have been discussed in the IRT including: an Accreditation Agreement applicable to all Privacy Proxy Services Providers, a "Fast-Track Opt-In" model for Registrars interested in providing such services, a "Lightweight Opt-Out" model with requirements including in the Registrar Accreditation Agreement, and a "No Accreditation" Model by which requirements are passed through the Registrars and imposed upon registrants via the Registrar's Registration Agreement.

Over the 2026 calendar year, the IRT is expected to sequentially develop the four modules expected to compose the ultimate Accreditation framework: definitions of key terms (by May 2026), Consensus Policy language (by July 2026), data disclosure frameworks (by August 2026) and a human rights impact assessment (by October 2026). All these elements would be subject to a Public Comment proceeding by December 2026.

Following the presentation, a GAC Member wondered, in light of privacy and data protection laws being in place in many jurisdictions, why such services were needed.

Regarding **Urgent Requests for disclosure of registration data** in "circumstances that pose an imminent threat to life, serious bodily injury, critical infrastructure, or child exploitation" it was recalled that this has been the subject of implementation effort since 2019, stemming from the ICANN Board-approved EPDP Phase 1 Policy Recommendation 18. In August 2023, the GAC raised public policy concerns with the ICANN Board regarding the IRT proposal to allow several business days for Contracted Parties to respond to Urgent Requests. The ICANN Board subsequently

determined that the matter should be revisited and convened a trilateral dialogue with the GAC and the GNSO Council. The parties ultimately agreed to move forward with the GAC proposal (15 October 2024) to resume work in two parallel tracks: an Authentication track to explore possible mechanisms to authenticate law enforcement requestors, and a
A policy track to determine an appropriate response time for authenticated Urgent Requests, assuming an authentication mechanism is in place.

Following discussions in the Registration Data IRT which resumed after ICANN83 in April 2025 (Policy track), the GAC provided Comments (15 December 2025) in an Public Comment proceeding regarding ICANN's proposed Consensus Policy Language, seeking finalization of the process, and confirming a 24 hours response timeline in the absence of exceptional circumstances (force majeure) to become enforceable upon availability of LEA Authentication mechanisms, without requiring additional policy development. Discussions with and between the GNSO Council and the ICANN Board during ICANN85 have clarified next steps towards enforceability of this timeline for response to Urgent Requests.

Regarding the response timeline: the ICANN Board indicated to the GNSO Council its support for finalizing and proceeding with the 24 hours timeline for response to Urgent Requests (publication as ICANN Consensus Policy). The GNSO Council signaled to the GAC that there was general agreement in the GNSO to do so. Regarding authentication of law enforcement requestors: the Board expressed preference for the GNSO Council to provide guidance that this is an implementation detail. However, the GNSO Council indicated that it was leaning towards the alternative option of providing supplemental policy recommendations on this matter as part of the expected SSAD supplemental policy recommendations.

On the **authentication of law enforcement requestors**, a GAC PSWG Co-chair recalled that in February 2025, the PSWG convened a Practitioners Group with representatives from the GAC, the GNSO and several law enforcement agencies (including Interpol, Europol and the FBI) to discuss the feasibility of Law Enforcement Authentication Mechanisms to enable Contracted Parties to respond swiftly to Urgent Requests.

To date, feasibility discussions among the Practitioners Group and with ICANN org have focused on a Short Term and a Long Term Authentication Mechanism. The Long Term mechanism consists of connecting enterprise law enforcement portal to ICANN's RDRS or successor system, with the law enforcement portal acting as an identity provider authenticating the requestor as a legitimate law enforcement agent and transmitting an authentication token securely to the Registrars through ICANN's services. This is seen as the most robust mechanism for which ICANN will be conducting a proof of concept in collaboration with Interpol and the FBI in the coming months.

A representative from Interpol presented the role and global structure of the international police cooperation organization which is currently building a secure platform to enable its 196 Member countries to share information and access specialized tools and applications, including Urgent requests for Registration Data.

In the meantime, ICANN is currently consulting Registrars on the utility to pursue an interim short term mechanism which would leverage existing lists of known law enforcement agencies email domains. Under this mechanism, ICANN would be able to confirm to a registrar whether an Urgent Request is coming from a requestor using a known law enforcement email domain or not. While this is recognized as a less robust form of authentication, preliminary feedback from registrars indicates that this would still be valuable in absence of the more robust long term mechanism.

Consistent with the ICANN84 Board resolution (30 October 2025) to encourage “the ICANN President and CEO, or his designee(s), to continue to collaborate with the GAC PSWG on possible law enforcement authentication mechanisms.”, an ICANN representative confirmed the organization’s commitment to conduct a proof of concept of the long term authentication mechanism. It will be aimed at confirming the technical feasibility and help develop the necessary technical and policy requirements to establish the permanent authentication system. ICANN indicated that a number of open questions remain to be answered in terms of the transparency, accountability and auditing mechanisms that are in place to prevent and address misuse of such authentication mechanisms.

A GAC Member shared confidence in the ability of national law enforcement agencies to work through Interpol systems as is already currently the case in other areas of policing, but expressed concerns and wondered how long it would take for those authentication mechanisms to be in place and for the 24-hour response timeline to then become enforceable, depending on the procedural steps required at ICANN.

Regarding **next for the RDRS and SSAD policy recommendations**, it was recalled that during ICANN84 in Dublin the ICANN Board resolved to continue operations of the RDRS for up to 2 years “while the community continues its deliberations regarding the future of the service and related policy recommendations”. Since then, the GNSO Council and ICANN Board have been discussing next steps on SSAD recommendations as reflected in a recent GNSO Council letter which highlighted that the ICANN Board is expected to non-adopt the pending SSAD recommendations, triggering the provisions of ICANN Bylaws Annex A, Section 9 which would enable the GNSO Council to provide Supplemental Recommendations, which it intends to deliver “within months, not years”, with the aim of improving the SSAD Recommendations based on the findings of the RDRS Standing Committee. It was noted that during ICANN85, the GNSO Council was to hold a Session to discuss these next steps regarding the development of SSAD Supplemental Recommendations. Based on ICANN85 conversations between the GAC and the GNSO Council, it is understood that the GAC will be involved in this process and continue to provide its input and perspectives, as it has since the beginning of the EPDP process in 2018.

In so doing, the GAC has consistently stressed the importance of enhancing the RDRS while it continues to be in operation, including better integration for registrars’ systems and requestors’ systems with the request portal and user experience improvements to reduce user friction. The GAC has also highlighted the importance of achieving the shared vision with the ICANN Board of an RDRS or Successor System that would provide mandatory registrar participation, a requirement for registrars with affiliated privacy and proxy services to also respond to RDRS requests for underlying

privacy/proxy customer contact data as part of their disclosure decision process, RDRS links in RDAP responses to promote awareness, and the option for country code top-level domains (ccTLDs) to voluntarily participate in the RDRS.

2.3. DNS Abuse

The ICANN85 GAC plenary session on DNS Abuse session covered national ccTLD policies, the multistakeholder gTLD policy development process currently underway at ICANN, and a voluntary, multistakeholder initiative to mitigate DNS abuse outside of ICANN. The GAC welcomed a presentation by the host country ccTLD (.in) on its policies to prevent DNS Abuse, as well as the Trusted Notifier Network (TNN), a not-for-profit organization focused on facilitating and operationalizing trusted notifier programs.

Dr. Devesh Tyagi, CEO of NIXI, **the .IN ccTLD Manager presented initiatives and policies to mitigate DNS Abuse** which include the verification of registrant identity based on official identification documents, a requirement for foreign registrants to demonstrate a legitimate connection to India, and enhanced monitoring of domain registrations to detect and prevent cybercrime, phishing activities and other misuses. This includes real-time monitoring and blocking of lists of keywords established in collaboration with governmental authorities, law enforcement agencies and cybercrime coordination organizations. The ccTLD manager has also recently included requirements in its Registrar Accreditation Agreement to mandate registrant information verification (eKYC) and the preservation of IP Address and financial transaction logs. These measures were reported to have led to significant reduction of abuse in the .IN ccTLD.

Turning the GAC's attention to **DNS Abuse mitigation in gTLDs**, it was recalled that DNS Abuse mitigation is a priority issue for the GAC as reflected in the GAC Strategic and Annual Plans, which for 2025/2026 include the objectives of advancing ICANN policy work in this area before further delegation of new gTLDs, while also building the subject matter capacity of GAC Members on DNS Abuse, with the understanding of DNS Abuse as defined by ICANN, that is: malware, botnets, phishing, pharming, and spam (when spam is used as a delivery mechanism for any of the other four types of DNS Abuse). Finally, it was recalled that gTLD Registries and Registrars are contractually required to respond to reports of DNS Abuse and that ICANN Compliance audits and enforces these contractual requirements.

In the ICANN83 GAC Prague Communiqué, the GAC issued Consensus Advice to ICANN Board urging the the GNSO Council to undertake all necessary preparations prior to ICANN84 towards starting targeted and narrowly scoped Policy Development Processes (PDPs) on DNS Abuse issues, prioritizing bulk registration of malicious domain names and the responsibility of registrars to investigate domains associated with registrant accounts that are the subject of actionable reports of DNS Abuse.

After ICANN84, the GAC formed a DNS Abuse Small Group with 17 GAC and PSWG participants to enable close and regular collaboration in support of GAC participation in policy development which was initiated by the GNSO Council in December 2025. Two Policy Development Processes were

initiated: PDP1 on Associated Domain Checks, for which a charter was subsequently adopted in January, and PDP2 on Safeguards for API access to new customers, which is expected to be launched at a later time.

Four GAC representatives from the GAC Small Group were nominated in the PDP1 Working Group: Martina Barbero (European Commission) and Gabriel Andrews (US FBI, PSWG Co-Chair) as “Members”,

Wolfgang Holzapfel (Germany, PSWG) as “Participant” and Naoum Mengoudis (Hellenic Police/Europol EMPACT, PSWG) as “Alternate”. Nine GAC Small Group participants will observe the PDP (AU, CA, CN, EG, ES, IN, JP, US, Europol).

The PDP1 Working Group tasked to propose GNSO policy recommendations was formed and has started meeting during ICANN85. During the initial four sessions during ICANN85, the PDP Working Group received a briefing on current ADC practices by subject matter experts. The current timeline indicates targeting the drafting of an Initial Report by February 2027, to be finalized by September 2027 for eventual consideration by the GNSO Council by end of 2027. The immediate next step is for ICANN stakeholder groups to share their “early input” on the PDP1 charter questions by 20 March 2026. The GAC Small group has started developing possible GAC positions which will be circulated for GAC endorsement before sharing with the PDP WG to the extent possible given the timeline constraint.

The PDP1 Charter questions include:

- What triggers the requirement to investigate ADC
- What criteria should be used to define “association” between domains? What elements can be considered to establish such “association”?
- What constitutes a reasonable investigation and what could be the impact on registrants?
- What data access and privacy safeguards are necessary to protect both registrants and registrars during associated domain checks?
- What are remedies for registrants in case of negative impact?
- What are appropriate timelines and thresholds for initiating and concluding the associated domain check?
- What specific requirements are necessary to implement this policy and what parts can be subject to best practices, or potentially left to the discretion of the contracted party?
- What metrics to be used to measure effectiveness of this policy and how to prove compliance?

In addition to developments in PDP1 deliberations, the GAC Topics leads indicated that the GAC will be monitoring the timeline for launching PDP2 on Safeguards for API access to new customers, and also continue to seek progress on the policy gaps identified in the Issue Report which the GAC signaled were priority issues, including: proactive monitoring as part of preventative measures, addressing registration data accuracy, increased transparency in the reporting obligations, consensus policy on subdomain abuse and centralized coordination mechanism for DGA Botnet attacks.

A GAC Member congratulated participants in the GAC Small Group for already providing significant input in the DNS Abuse PDP1 process, noting that this was an encouraging start. At the same time, this GAC Member called on the PDP1 Working Group Chair to shorten the expected timeline for completion of the work. Regarding additional policy work, this GAC Member shared its priorities: addressing registration data accuracy and transparency reporting obligations. Another GAC Member stressed the importance of preventative measures including the verification of registration information, and the suppression of the 15-day period gTLD registrars currently have for validating and verifying registrant information, which it believes should be the subject of GAC Advice to the ICANN Board, towards the adoption of appropriate contract amendments.

Recognizing the importance of **stakeholder collaboration to address DNS abuse activity that is both within and outside of ICANN's remit**, GAC Topic Leads on DNS Abuse continue to consider voluntary initiatives such as trusted notifier programs, as part of their efforts under the 2025/2026 GAC Annual Plan to *“provide GAC members with examples of best practices, guidelines, or trusted notifier programs that may assist DNS Abuse policy development within their respective jurisdictions”*.

Manju Chen, Director of Policy at **Trusted Notifier Network (TNN)**, a not-for-profit organization focused on facilitating and operationalizing trusted notifier programs, discussed the need for and benefits of such programs. Analyzing the current environment as incentivizing high volume of low quality abuse reports leading ineffective and unsatisfactory mitigation justified by the need for Internet intermediaries to reduce risks in taking inappropriate mitigations, the TNN explained that establishing trusted relationship including accountability and indemnification provisions improves outcomes by increasing the quality, accuracy and credibility of takedown requests and by decreasing risks for intermediaries to take action.

3. GAC OPERATIONAL MATTERS

3.1. GAC Operational Updates

GAC Communiqué

GAC Support staff reviewed the Communiqué drafting schedule and process for ICANN85. The process has progressively evolved in the past several years and attendees were familiarized with how some of those recent innovations would be encompassed for ICANN84.

ICANN Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) Framework

GAC Support Staff reminded the committee that the ICANN Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) Framework is a new community-led model developed by ICANN stakeholders for evaluating and improving the effectiveness of ICANN's various organizational structures and processes. It was developed by the Continuous Improvement Program Community Coordination Group (CIP-CCG) and published last July.

The framework responds to a recommendation from the Third Accountability and Transparency Review Team (ATRT3) — specifically Recommendation 3.6 — which called for transforming ICANN's traditional Organizational Reviews into a more *dynamic, ongoing improvement process*.

Some Key Features of the Framework include:

- Community-led Assessments: Each Supporting Organization (SO), Advisory Committee (AC), and the Nominating Committee will use the framework to evaluate their own processes.
- Principles-Criteria-Indicators Model: The framework introduces an approach based on *principles, criteria, and indicators* to guide assessment and improvement work.
- Iterative & Flexible: Rather than fixed, one-off reviews, the CIP is designed for *continuous cycles* of evaluation and enhancement that can be tailored to each community group's needs.
- Accountability & Transparency: Each community structure is expected to report on CIP progress at the end of assessment cycles, typically within three years.

With the framework finalized last year, Support staff explained that the work now shifts to implementation — where each community group can begin planning and conducting its assessments under the CIP model. The GAC Leadership has had initial conversations about the framework and expects the three-year process to progress within the committee this calendar year. Committee members were alerted that this work will begin prior to ICANN86 and continues through the remainder of the calendar year.

GAC 2026 Leadership Election

GAC Support staff reminded the committee that at the ICANN83 Meeting in Prague last year, the GAC agreed to implement a new annual election cycle that would enable new GAC Chairs and Vice Chairs to align their terms with the ICANN annual meeting cycle. This year presents the first opportunity for the committee to follow this new cycle. In order to align the next GAC Chair term with the sitting of the new ICANN Board at the ICANN86 Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Staff announced that the nomination period for the next GAC Chair will commence immediately after the ICANN85 meeting (13 March) and run until 24 April. If needed, a balloting period will be held from 18 May until 10 June, with the election concluding during the ICANN86 Policy Forum in Seville, Spain. The new GAC Chair's term will commence on the last day of the ICANN87 AGM in October of this year.

GAC Future Contributions to the ICANN Nominating Committee

GAC Support staff reminded the committee that the ICANN Nominating Committee (NomCom) is an independent committee tasked with identifying and selecting individuals for ICANN leadership positions. The ICANN Bylaws call for the NomCom to make a specified number of appointments each year to the ICANN Board of Directors (Board), the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Council, the Country-Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO) Council, and the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC).

For years, the GAC has had a reserved non-voting liaison position on the NomCom. However, this position has gone vacant for some years due to a lack of agreement within the committee on the proper role for this position. At one point back in 2015 a GAC Working Group was formed to help facilitate GAC consideration of NomCom participation.

With a new NomCom (2026) now in place and plans for that group to be more proactive in seeking community input, the GAC leadership considered that the committee resume some of those previous discussions to determine if GAC views of this topic have evolved. Meeting attendees agreed that this is a topic that merits further committee discussion in a dedicated session during ICANN86.

Action Point(s):

- **GAC** to schedule a session to discuss Nominating Committee contributions during ICANN86.

3.2. ICANN87 High Level Government Meeting (HLGM)

The GAC Vice-Chair acting as "caretaker" for GAC Strategic Objective 1 on the Role for Governments in ICANN, recalled that several of the Expected Outcomes in the GAC Annual Plan 2025/2026 refer to organizing High Level Government Meetings. This includes leveraging the attendance and participation of senior levels of governments in such meetings to increase ICANN stakeholder's understanding of the role of governments in ICANN. This objective is part of a larger set of goals

proposed in the GAC Guidelines for High Level Government Meetings (2016), which also includes the discussion of current public policy issues and challenges at a very senior level.

A representative from the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Oman introduced the Sultanate of Oman's plans to host the next HGLM in Muscat on Sunday 18 October 2026, in conjunction with the ICANN87 Annual General Meeting. The host suggests that the agenda includes enhancing the ICANN's regional presence, promoting Internet access, and finding suitable solutions for the internet of the future.

As part of the HGLM planning process it was recalled that the GAC, in collaboration with the Host of the HGLM, is responsible for the development of the agenda of the meeting, with the support of ICANN's Government Engagement team (GE). During this session, and in addition to agenda topics proposed by ICANN GE, several GAC members identified topics of interest for discussion with and among senior levels of governments:

Three decades of multistakeholder model of Internet governance (including components of success, shaping the IGF as a UN permanent forum, and increasing participation in the GAC)

Universal acceptance: moving from concept to action

Expectations on ICANN's role in capacity building

Security and stability of the Internet, including consideration of the impact of AI.

Considering the status of action items from the previous HGLM meeting

Risk related to new generation technology.

Addressing Internet shutdowns as a challenge to Internet access

Several GAC participants made suggestions pertaining to the format and the type of discussions that should be considered for the next HGLM including:

Exploring parallel tracks and focus group conversations on specific topics

Organize multi-stakeholder panels so that representatives from the ICANN community stakeholders are involved in the high-level governmental meeting

Bilateral engagement between GAC delegations

Bilateral engagement between GAC delegations and the rest of the ICANN Community

Holding regional preparation meetings to determine topics that are relevant to the Host region

A GAC Member inquired about contingency plans in case the ICANN meeting cannot be held in Oman so that GAC delegates can communicate this to their high level invitees, who will likely ask for such information. An ICANN org representative confirmed that ICANN87 planning is proceeding without changes, that ICANN is monitoring the situation in coordination with the host, and that GAC Members would be kept informed.

GAC members were invited to provide further input on potential agenda topics for the HGLM on the GAC mailing list. It is expected that a GAC Webinar will be convened after ICANN85 to continue discussions on the agenda of the HGLM, with a view to have a preliminary agenda ready to be shared as part of the formal HGLM invitations which will be sent to the high level invitees by end of

April 2026. The agenda would then be finalized with confirmation of moderators, panelists and speaking slots before ICANN86.

In the meantime, GAC Members and Observers are expected to provide contact information of their relevant high-level invitees by 30 March 2026 in a form that was circulated on the GAC mailing list.

3.3. Emerging Topics

Part 1: DNS as a Foundation for Digital Identity

Dr. Balaji Rajendran from India's SIDAC Center for Development of Advanced Computing presented an overview of new technologies supporting the evolution of the Domain Name System's uses as a trusted foundation for digital identity. Recognizing the role of the DNS as providing human friendly identifiers, as part of a unique global namespace with capabilities such as DNSSEC, Dr. Balaji proposed that it serves as an anchor of trust and authentication. In this context, several new technological developments, mostly in research and proposal phases, provide opportunities to continue advance the levels of trust it can provide, through the tokenization of domains as non-fungible tokens (NFTs) on blockchain, which can record the entire lifecycle from registration, renewal, audits, to ownership transfers, and the integration of emerging decentralized blockchain-based naming systems through a proposed universal name resolution service. Additionally, Dr. Balaji discussed Artificial Intelligence capabilities which can provide for safer, more reliable resolution outcomes, including in terms of DNS Abuse mitigation.

Part 2: Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP) Review

During this presentation by Brian Beckham and Zach Muscovitch, leads of the WIPO-ICA collaborative project which conducted a review of the UDRP, it was recalled that the GNSO Council initiated a two-phase Rights Protection Mechanisms (RPMs) review Policy Development Process (PDP) in 2016, the second phase of which is be dedicated to the UDRP. The WIPO-ICA project engaged a group of 16 experts, augmented by 28 additional subject matter experts, and produced a report with practical, consensus-based findings which recommended maintaining the stability of the procedure and implementing practical operational improvements, including to increase process efficiency.

Several policy issues were referred to for potential consideration in the scope of future GNSO policy development such as whether to expand protected rights to geographic indication), the introduction of an appeal mechanism, and the consideration of evolving threats and abuses such as phishing, impersonation and fraud.

Susan Payne, Chair of the GNSO Council, indicated that phase 2 of the RPM Review PDP was deferred pending completion of the implementation of Phase 1 Policy Recommendations and other priorities such as the DNS abuse PDP. In fact, she indicated that the GNSO Council is discussing a formula process to prioritize the Council's workload, taking into consideration multiple ongoing PDPs

in the GNOS. It was indicated that the existing charter for phase 2 of the RPM Review PDP is outdated and will be revised to achieve a narrow scope, and that the WIPO-ICA report is considered a valuable resource to inform this process.

In response to a GAC Member's question, it was recalled that in The Hague GAC Communiqué under issues of importance the GAC stated that the ICANN bylaws provide for ICANN to consider, in its policymaking processes, relevant public bodies with existing expertise that resides outside of ICANN, and it was suggested that the recent WIPO-ICA work be given due consideration as part of the GNSO Council's future chartering effort. A GAC Member expressed support for the WIPO-ICA report to serve as a resource for the scoping of a narrowly tailed review of the UDRP.

Another GAC Member expressed support for a limited and carefully structured appeals mechanism which could strengthen the procedural legitimacy of the UDRP while preserving the speed and efficiency that are central to its proceedings. It was also suggested that the UDRP Review be an opportunity to examine whether the current cost structure could be rationalized to ensure greater accessibility for smaller rights holders, startups and small-medium enterprises.

3.4. GAC Capacity Development

The GAC advanced its capacity development efforts at ICANN85 to enhance understanding, readiness, and preparing governments for the Next Round of new gTLDs. Two targeted sessions were delivered covering key aspects of the application process, including timelines, application types, available resources, and relevant programs such as the Registry Service Provider (RSP) and Applicant Support Program (ASP).

Discussions also focused on refining procedures for submitting GAC Early Warnings, improving access to clear information on objection mechanisms, and planning further exchanges—both ahead of ICANN86 and during the Early Warning period—to strengthen coordination, knowledge-sharing, and effective engagement in the application review process.

3.5. Review of Reviews

The GAC discussed the Review of Reviews work presented by GAC members in the Cross-Community Group (Manal Ismail [co-chair] and Tracy Hackshaw), noting completion of the fact-finding phase and progression to the design phase. A [table-based proposal](#) previously circulated was used as the basis for discussion. The proposal includes five categories of reviews, all aimed at assessing whether ICANN is fulfilling its mission, commitments, and core values as set out in the Bylaws: (1) Accountability and Transparency Review; (2) Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) assessment; (3) Structural Review; (4) Review of Reviews; and (5) ad hoc/on-demand reviews.

For the Accountability and Transparency Review, discussion focused on evaluating ICANN's execution of its mission, commitments, and core values, with scope defined within agreed

guardrails. Recommendations may include improvements where necessary and identify key development areas that may strengthen effectiveness in support of the mission.

On cadence, a fixed five-year cycle was initially considered, but flexibility was broadly supported to avoid backlog and resource constraints, while ensuring reviews are not indefinitely delayed. The CIP assessment was described as a lightweight exercise to confirm that continuous improvement programs were completed in line with the agreed framework, test outputs to ensure conclusions are supported, identify good practices that may be beneficial to other groups, and ensure follow-through as intended. The cadence is aligned with SO/AC and NomCom reporting cycles (approximately every three years). The scope is predefined in the ICANN Bylaws and does not include internal SO/AC structures. A question remains on whether the Board should also be subject to CIP principles.

For the Structural Review, two approaches were discussed: a system-level review of ICANN without routinely reviewing SO/AC internal structures unless specifically requested, or a mandatory review of SO/AC structures, composition, representation, and Board decision-making processes. Concerns were raised regarding overlap between review types and the potential for process proliferation, which may be time-consuming and undermine the inclusivity of the system.

The Review of Reviews would assess the overall effectiveness and coherence of the review system, with options for fixed cadence, ad hoc triggers, or a combination, potentially involving leadership and the CEO depending on scope.

The ad hoc/on-demand review was described as a narrowly scoped, event or purpose-driven mechanism based on demonstrated need and confirmed by the community, for issues that cannot be addressed through policy development or other existing mechanisms. It may potentially be used to address issues such as SSR (Security, Stability and Resilience Review) and CCT (Competition, Consumer Trust/Choice), depending on how these are ultimately integrated into the structure.

GAC participants emphasized the need to improve clarity and accessibility of the framework and noted that SSR and CCT must remain visible within the structure. Concerns were also raised about overlap between review types. GAC members were invited to review the table and come back to GAC members of the RoR CCG with any questions or comments. The proposal is not a final draft and remains a set of building blocks, with additional input and follow-up as needed, including a wider discussion with the co-chairs of the cross-community group. It was also noted that the Board has been asked for input and may be further engaged.

4. GAC WORKING GROUPS

4.1. GAC Public Safety Working Group (PSWG)

The GAC PSWG continued its work to advocate for improved measures to combat DNS Abuse and promote lawful, effective access to domain name registration data. The PSWG contributed to the GAC sessions pertaining to DNS Abuse and Registration Data issues, and the GAC bilateral meeting with the GNSO Council where it discussed Law Enforcement Authentication tools relevant to the ongoing community discussions on Urgent Requests for non-public registration data. The PSWG also participated in panel discussions organized by the ALAC and the Contracted Parties House of the GNSO, including regarding the criminal use of Domain Generation Algorithms (DGAs). Finally, and alongside GAC Members, the PSWG engaged with community stakeholders in meetings of the newly convened GNSO Policy Development Process Working Group on Associated Domain Checks, as a part of policy development on DNS Abuse mitigation.

4.2. GAC Universal Acceptance Working Group (UA-IDN WG)

The GAC UA-IDN WG updated the community on the status of Universal Acceptance, specifically regarding Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and email addresses by shared experiences and case studies. The discussion focused on ensuring that the internet remains a globally interoperable resource for everyone. Presenters emphasized that while the internet is global, many systems still do not recognize or support domain names in non-Latin scripts like Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic, or Thai. Achieving Universal Acceptance is viewed as a "digital inclusion" necessity, allowing the next billion users to navigate the internet in their native languages.

Subsequently, the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) reported on efforts to update software libraries and standards so that email servers and websites can correctly validate and process all valid domain names. The UASG provided technical insights into the current readiness of global email providers and web browsers. ICANN staff lead on IDN programs, addressed the technical integration of UA into the Root Zone. Plans were discussed to use "UA Day" as a global focal point for training and awareness-raising activities. GAC members shared their input on UA challenges and discussed how governments can lead by example through "UA-ready" procurement policies, ensuring that public digital services are accessible to all citizens regardless of the script they use.

Action Point(s):

- **GAC members** to remain engaged with the UASG and to promote UA as a fundamental component of national digital sovereignty and inclusion strategies.

5. CROSS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1. Meeting with the ICANN Board

The GAC met with the ICANN Board and discussed:

1. ICANN contributions to the implementation of the WSIS+20 outcomes
2. GAC participation and interests in the Review of Reviews Cross Community Group process
3. Future GAC Contributions to the ICANN Nominating Committee
4. Registration Data Request Service (RDRS) and Standardized System for Access and Disclosure (SSAD)
5. Urgent Requests and Law Enforcement Authentication
6. Accuracy of Registration Data
7. Mandatory DNS Abuse Reporting by Registries and Registrars
8. Root Server System Governance

Topic 1: ICANN contributions to the implementation of the WSIS+20 outcomes

Summary: In response to one of the Board's pre-ICANN85 meeting questions, the GAC identified this topic as a top emerging trend that may impact ICANN that the Board should consider.

Attendees explored what steps might be taken in the future (particularly by ICANN org) to assure implementation of the WSIS+20 results.

Key Take-Away: ICANN org expects to continue to contribute to general IGF funding and through efforts to organize future IGF sessions. ICANN CEO took note of an idea to examine more "strategic funding" of the IGF by ICANN going forward.

Topic 2: GAC participation and interests in the Review of Reviews (RoR) Cross Community Group (CCG) process

Summary: In response to one of the Board's pre-ICANN85 meeting questions, the GAC shared that there is active participation by governments in the RoR CCG. The GAC will continue to participate in the CCG, with special interest in:

- How important reviews such as SSR and CCT will be accommodated in the refreshed proposal
- How the overall cadence and workload will look like after compiling all Reviews on one timeline, and
- How the final proposal will be driven by a functional approach, taking care that each review has a distinct function and a clear added-value

Key Take-Away: In response to a GAC follow-up question, the Board indicated that it is open to taking on its own Continuous Improvements Program. A small group is already looking into the matter.

Topic 3: Future GAC Contributions to the ICANN Nominating Committee

Summary: GAC members were concerned how the Board could continue to be renewed by future new Board position applicants (those selected by the ICANN NomCom) when the level of work continues to increase for Board members.

Key Take-Away: Board Members acknowledged the challenges of the work on the Board and advised they continue to look for ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness of Board processes. The Board has recently tasked the Board Governance Committee (BGC) with taking another deep look into Board processes and the BGC is in the process of forming a small group of Board members to identify areas where efficiencies can be implemented. The BGC is also looking at the amount of travel, in particular face-to-face workshops, to see if there are additional efficiencies in that area that can be implemented.

Topic 4: Registration Data Request Service (RDRS) and Standardized System for Access and Disclosure (SSAD)

Summary: Following the Board's decision late last year to extend the operations of the RDRS for 2 more years (until November 2027), Board members shared with the GAC that this week they will be resolving to not adopt the SSAD recommendations in the EPDP Phase 2 Final Report and will urge the GNSO Council to align future policy work on the SSAD recommendations with other relevant efforts within the time frame of the two-year RDRS operational extension.

Key Take-Away: The Board is hopeful that the GNSO Council can achieve a rapid turnaround of that work by tweaking existing recommendations rather than starting a fresh PDP. The Board hopes to have a liaison connected to that GNSO work effort.

Topic 5: Urgent Requests and Law Enforcement Authentication

Summary: Session attendees were reminded of the recent effort to bifurcate issues related to these topics into two parallel work "tracks". A Track 1- to determine appropriate timeline for Urgent Requests for lawful disclosure (led by ICANN org + IRT) and a Track 2 - to develop an authentication mechanism (led by the GAC's Public Safety Working Group) for LEAs seeking that data.

Key Take-Away: The Board believes that updated timeline language for Track 1 is complete. Earlier in the meeting week, a few Board members and the GNSO Council discussed the best path forward for integrating an authentication mechanism with the timeline for responding to urgent requests. Regarding the Track 2 authentication efforts, the Board and ICANN org believe that continued discussion with law enforcement experienced in authentication such as Interpol and the US-FBI, would help ICANN and the community develop authentication mechanism requirements through proof-of-concept testing.

Topic 6: Accuracy of Registration Data

Summary: Session attendees were reminded that the focused-PDP currently underway regarding DNS Abuse is taking resources and priority over additional issues like potential modifications to the 15-day post-registration verification period. At the suggestion of some GAC Members that avenues beyond the PDP route (e.g., contract amendments) could be considered as an avenue for considering some changes to the verification period, Board members noted that contract amendments are proposed “sparingly” and that the Board would prefer a more “organic” approach whereby registrars would come forward with contract amendment suggestions.

Key Take-Away: Interest in 15-day verification period topic/issue noted, but no Board expectation that any GNSO work can take place on the matter in the short term.

Topic 7: Mandatory DNS Abuse Reporting by Registries and Registrars

Summary: GAC Members were advised that further work on this topic will presumably be considered by the GNSO Council in the context of competing interests and limited community and staff resources.

Key Take-Away: No commitments made that this is an area that can be addressed in the short term.

Topic 8: Root Server Governance

Summary: Board members shared that they are committed to evolving Root Server System (RSS) governance and explained that the RSS Governance Working Group (RSS GWG) published its report just a few weeks ago. No action on the report is planned during or immediately after ICANN85. The Board expects to consider the RSS GWG report, including to review how stakeholder inputs were considered. If the Board approves the report, then it expects that the phases set out in the RSS Governance Structure would proceed expeditiously - including the formation of a Root Server System Council. Subsequently, that Council would come together to establish recommendations on the policies and standards necessary to establish the Governance Structure itself.

Key Take-Away: Expect further action on this matter in the coming months.

5.3 Meeting with the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO)

The GAC and the GNSO Council held their bilateral meeting at ICANN85 to exchange views on key policy topics, including DNS Abuse mitigation, Registration Data Request Service (RDRS) and SSAD developments, Urgent Requests for disclosure of registration data, and Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIA). The GAC Vice-Chair opened the session, welcoming GNSO Council

representatives and encouraging continued collaboration between the two groups, including intersessionally.

The GNSO Council provided an update on ongoing work on **DNS Abuse mitigation**. It was noted that a Policy Development Process (PDP) on associated domain checks has been initiated, with strong community interest and participation, including from GAC members. The GNSO emphasized that the PDP is intentionally narrowly scoped to enable efficient and implementable outcomes, with an initial report currently expected by April 2027, while noting that efforts are underway to accelerate the timeline where possible. The GAC welcomed the progress and active engagement, while encouraging further consideration of opportunities to shorten timelines and deliver earlier outcomes, particularly given the priority nature of DNS Abuse.

GAC members raised broader concerns regarding the pace of progress on DNS Abuse and the need for tangible and timely measures. Suggestions included exploring operational or contractual approaches, where feasible, to address issues such as registrant data verification timelines and improving transparency through more comprehensive and centralized reporting mechanisms. GNSO representatives acknowledged these concerns and reiterated that all priority topics identified in the DNS Abuse issue report remain under consideration, with further work dependent on PDP progress and resource availability.

The discussion then turned to the **Registration Data Request Service (RDRS)** and the **Standardized System for Access/Disclosure (SSAD)**. The GAC noted its support for progressing work based on the RDRS policy alignment analysis and emphasized the importance of timely next steps. The GNSO Council reported that it is considering a path whereby the ICANN Board would not adopt the original SSAD recommendations, enabling the development of targeted supplemental recommendations based on more recent work, including the RDRS Standing Committee Final Report. This approach is intended to allow focused updates without initiating a new PDP, with a view to completing the work within a shorter timeframe.

GAC members highlighted the importance of ensuring effectiveness and broad participation in RDRS, including considerations around mandatory participation and comprehensive reporting. Input from GNSO representatives and stakeholders noted operational challenges with the current system and emphasized the need to balance efficiency for contracted parties with the objective of achieving greater consistency and visibility across disclosure practices.

On **Urgent Requests** for lawful disclosure of registration data, the GAC reiterated its support for finalizing the agreed timeline of 24 hours, with a possible extension of up to 72 hours in exceptional circumstances. The GAC also underscored its view that the development of authentication mechanisms for requestors should not require a new policy development process and could be addressed in implementation.

GNSO representatives indicated that there is general alignment on finalizing the Urgent Request timeline and outlined possible approaches for addressing authentication, including through implementation or as part of supplemental recommendations related to SSAD. Updates were also

provided on ongoing work by the Public Safety Working Group and ICANN org to develop authentication models, including both longer-term solutions based on law enforcement portals and interim approaches using validated email domains. GAC members expressed interest in continued engagement on this work and welcomed opportunities to contribute to its development.

The GAC and GNSO also exchanged views on **Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIA)**. The GAC noted its approach of applying HRIA to policy decisions where it is asked to provide input, while not extending this to internal procedures. It highlighted ongoing work within the GAC Human Rights and International Law Working Group and emphasized the importance of incorporating human rights considerations, including privacy and freedom of expression, into policy discussions such as the DNS Abuse PDP. GNSO representatives welcomed continued dialogue and encouraged the inclusion of relevant expertise to support these assessments.

Under AOB, the GAC raised the recent WIPO report on the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP), including potential future work on issues such as geographical indications. The GNSO indicated that the topic is part of its broader prioritization exercise and may be considered in future policy work, noting that any substantive changes would require a PDP.

Both the GAC and the GNSO emphasized the value of continued engagement beyond formal ICANN meetings, encouraging direct exchanges between topic leads and stakeholders to support more efficient and informed collaboration. The meeting concluded with mutual appreciation for the constructive dialogue and a shared commitment to ongoing cooperation.

Action Point(s):

- **GAC members** to provide early input to the DNS Abuse PDP charter (deadline 20 March 2026).

5.3 Meeting with the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)

The GAC and ALAC held a bilateral session to discuss issues of mutual interest. The agenda focused on the topics of Latin Script Diacritics, DNS Abuse, and WSIS+20 and global digital governance processes.

On the **Latin Script Diacritics**, the ALAC noted that the Latin Diacritics Policy Development Process (PDP) originated from a request by French Canadian At-Large stakeholders, who sought parity between the commonly used “.québec” and the already delegated “.quebec.” As the character pair {e, é} is not classified as a variant by the Latin Script Generation Panel, the issue could not be addressed under the EPDP on IDNs consensus policy. The ALAC raised both this specific concern and the broader issue with the GNSO, which led to the publication of an Issue Report in September 2024, recommending a narrowly scoped PDP to address similar cases across scripts. The Latin Script Diacritics PDP was subsequently initiated by the GNSO Council in November 2024.

The PDP’s Draft Report was opened for public comment until February 2026. An initial review of the comments indicates substantial input, particularly in relation to the PDP’s dependencies on the EPDP

on IDNs and the need to clarify linguistic nuances. This is especially relevant given that the EPDP on IDNs has already been incorporated into the Applicant Guidebook (AGB), whereas the Latin Diacritics PDP has not.

Taking these inputs and required refinements into account, the PDP team currently estimates completion by October 2026, at which point the GNSO Council may consider the LD PDP Final Report. Given the additional time required for GNSO and Board processes, the ALAC considers it unlikely that the resulting consensus policy will be ready for implementation before mid-2027. The ALAC therefore expresses its preference that these recommendations could have been incorporated into the Applicant Guidebook for the 2026 round.

Subsequently, the GAC noted that the PDP aligns closely with its priorities, particularly with regard to Universal Acceptance and the promotion of linguistic diversity in the DNS. The Latin script supports hundreds of languages worldwide, many of which rely on diacritics to convey accurate meaning, pronunciation, and cultural identity. Enhancing the treatment and management of Latin script diacritics therefore contributes to greater global inclusivity, helping to ensure that online identifiers reflect the diversity of language communities using the DNS. While the GAC would have preferred for the PDP's recommendations to be incorporated into the conditions governing the Next Round, it also recognizes the importance of advancing the round without further delay.

Finally, the GAC and ALAC were encouraged to remain closely engaged on this issue, as the outcomes of the PDP are expected to strengthen the policy framework for subsequent rounds and better support linguistic diversity online.

On the **DNS Abuse: government expectations and end-user harm** topic, the ALAC opened the discussion by introducing the issue and identifying potential questions that may arise as the first PDP on associated domain checks progresses. The ALAC expressed its intention to initiate a dialogue with the GAC on these matters. The ALAC also noted the increasing inclusion of human rights impact assessments in PDPs and raised questions regarding the safeguards that may need to be considered in this context. For example, as a preliminary brainstorming discussion, it was observed that while compromised domains were excluded from the scope of the PDP, the treatment of compromised accounts remains unclear. In cases where an account is compromised and used to register a malicious domain, it should not be assumed that all domains registered under that account are malicious. This could instead warrant a more proportionate response, such as a soft suspension mechanism that facilitates appeal, review, and potential restoration of affected domain names. The ALAC underscored the importance of ensuring that, regardless of the amendments and changes resulting from the DNS Abuse PDP, robust redress mechanisms should be established to prioritize the rights of registrants.

The GAC noted the establishment of a dedicated small group focused on DNS Abuse, aimed at supporting the development of the committee's position on DNS Abuse PDP-related matters. The GAC indicated that certain elements of the recently approved contractual amendments could serve as a useful starting point for further work. It also emphasized the importance of efficient collaboration across stakeholder groups.

The GAC further highlighted that several issues, particularly those not fully addressed in the 2025 Issue Report, remain under close review; and continues to monitor existing gaps. With regard to proactive measures, the GAC expressed alignment with the ALAC, including on the importance of transparency in reporting. Finally, the GAC reiterated its commitment to meeting community expectations concerning the integration of human rights impact assessments.

The GAC and ALAC agreed to continue collaborating closely within the PDP process.

Regarding the **Applicant Support Program (ASP)**, the ALAC referred to the ICANN Board Chair's recent blog, which indicates that the Board intends to fulfill its commitment to consider providing additional support, as the number of potentially qualifying applicants exceeds the original budget, which was designed to accommodate 45 applicants, compared to the 75 applications received to date across all five ICANN regions.

To allow for a more detailed discussion of the Board's request for community feedback on the proposal to allocate an additional USD 4.9 million from the 2012 round auction proceeds to support up to 75 qualified applicants, it was suggested that both groups continue discussions on this matter after the meeting.

Finally, regarding the **WSIS+20 and broader global digital governance processes**, the ALAC asked about lessons learned and next steps following the WSIS+20 review, and expressed its interest in exploring how both groups could collaborate on this matter.

The GAC noted that governments participated in the WSIS+20 process and successfully reached consensus on a document, but that the need to implement its outcomes still remains. It therefore recommended that both groups reconvene intersessionally to discuss the potential role of ICANN and the broader community in this work.

5.4 Meeting with the Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC)

The RSSAC met with the GAC to provide an overview on the Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC), while also helping the committee have a better understanding of what the DNS Root Server System is about.

In its presentation, the RSSAC presented on the scope of its activity, i.e to advise the ICANN community and Board on matters relating to the operation, administration, security, and integrity of the Internet's Root Server System (ICANN Bylaws Art 12.2). The RSSAC also touched on its role in policy recommendations, noting the objective to restate the long-established normative framework used to operate the Root Server System, and to suggest continued developments that grow from that existing framework.

Subsequently, the RSSAC elaborated on the DNS Root Server System, emphasizing that its objective is to enhance understanding of both the system and the role of Root Server Operators. This includes clarifying the function and purpose of the DNS, as well as the roles of address resolvers and authoritative servers, and explaining how, when, and why resolvers query the Root Server System. In

summary, the Root Server System provides information on TLD server addresses rather than Internet content, and it does not determine which TLD server address information is included in the root zone.

Finally, the discussion focused on the resilience, governance, and sustainability of the root server system, with participants broadly agreeing that the system remains highly stable and reliable after decades of operation. The exchange reflected complementary perspectives from the GAC and RSSAC. The GAC welcomed the system's long-standing resilience and called for continued transparency, including updates on cyber incident reporting and insights into emerging security trends such as AI-related threats, while stressing the importance of ensuring that evolving governance arrangements support long-term stability. In response, the RSSAC highlighted the technical community's primary focus on operations, noting that governance issues are being addressed through the RSSAC Governance Working Group, which has already submitted recommendations and will continue its work. They also emphasized a key concern pertaining to sustainability, pointing out that root server operations rely heavily on voluntary, unfunded efforts, and warning that long-term stability may require greater financial support, potentially including government contributions.

5.5 Meeting with the Address Supporting Organization (ASO)

The GAC met with the ASO to receive an update on the ICP-2 review work. The ASO presented the role of the Number Resource Organization (NRO) and Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), explaining their responsibility for allocating IP address resources within a bottom-up, multi-stakeholder model. They noted that their mission is to support global Internet growth by ensuring open access to numbering resources, while also highlighting emerging challenges, including potential risks such as the failure of an RIR and the need to ensure continuity of IP address management.

The ASO further explained that the ICP-2 framework is outdated and is being revised to introduce clearer governance, lifecycle management, and accountability mechanisms for Regional Internet Registries. A multi-year consultative process has produced successive drafts, while remaining open issues include recognition and appeal procedures, audit thresholds, emergency continuity arrangements, and the balance between operational flexibility and stronger compliance requirements. The ASO also noted ongoing drafting work aimed at finalizing the document within the year.

The GAC welcomed the progress but raised concerns regarding audit criteria, timelines, and follow-up actions, as well as the need for more transparent and objective performance benchmarks. The importance of strengthening the multi-stakeholder nature of the framework was also emphasized, including greater involvement of governments and affected stakeholders in recognition and de-recognition processes, and ensuring that accountability mechanisms are robust, transparent, and not solely driven by the RIRs themselves.

5.4 Meeting with the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)

The session provided an overview of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and its role within the Internet ecosystem, explaining that it develops open, interoperable Internet protocols through a bottom-up, transparent process based on individual participation. The IETF emphasized its mission to produce freely available technical standards (RFCs) that enable global interoperability, support digital economies, and foster innovation, while relying on rough consensus and voluntary adoption rather than formal enforcement. It also outlined its long-standing collaboration with ICANN, particularly through the IANA function and broader technical-policy coordination, and highlighted ongoing technical work, including developments related to DNS, AI, and new working groups. The role of the Internet Society was also noted, particularly in supporting the IETF and facilitating engagement through initiatives such as the Policymaker Program aimed at increasing government understanding of Internet standards.

In the discussion, GAC members welcomed the overview and raised questions regarding participation, costs, and the integration of technical standards into ICANN processes, as well as broader considerations such as the incorporation of human rights aspects into protocol development. The IETF clarified that participation is open and does not require formal membership, with remote participation and fee waivers available, and reiterated that while it is not a policymaking body, policy considerations can be reflected through its open, community-driven processes. The exchange highlighted the importance of continued engagement between technical and policy communities to ensure alignment between Internet standards development and public policy objectives.

Meeting Follow-Up - Notable Post-Meeting Committee Dates to be tracked by support staff:

- Publication of GAC ICANN85 Communiqué - 16 March 2026
- ICANN85 GAC Minutes ~ April 2026
- Call for Topics for ICANN86 (policy topics, WG updates, joint sessions) ~ ASAP
- ICANN86 GAC Agenda Setting Calls (to review preliminary agenda) ~ late April 2026 (and potential #2 ~ mid/late - May 2026)
- Nominations Close for GAC Chair Election - 24 April
- ICANN86 Policy Forum, 8-11 June 2026, Seville, Spain

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Attachment 1 - ICANN85 Community Forum - GAC ATTENDEES LIST

	Registrations	Attended (in-person & virtual)
Member Delegations	82	71
Observer Delegations	9	9
Member Delegates		
Member Delegates	136	105
Observer Delegates	10	10

GAC Members (71)		
European Commission	Government of Georgia	Government of Papua New Guinea
Government of Argentina	Government of Germany	Government of Paraguay
Government of Armenia	Government of Grenada	Government of Poland
Government of Australia	Government of Guatemala	Government of Portugal
Government of Austria	Government of Holy See (Vatican City State)	Government of Romania
Government of Bahrain	Government of Hong Kong (China)	Government of Russian Federation
Government of Bangladesh	Government of India	Government of Sao Tome and Principe
Government of Belgium	Government of Indonesia	Government of Senegal
Government of Benin	Government of Ireland	Government of Serbia
Government of Bermuda	Government of Islamic Republic of Iran	Government of Singapore
Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Government of Israel	Government of Spain
Government of Brazil	Government of Italy	Government of Suriname, Republic of

Government of Burundi	Government of Jamaica	Government of Sweden
Government of Cameroon	Government of Japan	Government of Switzerland
Government of Canada	Government of Korea, Republic of	Government of Chinese Taipei
Government of Cayman Islands	Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic	Government of Timor-Leste
Government of Central African Republic	Government of Lebanon	Government of Tonga
Government of Chad, Republic of	Government of Libya	Government of Trinidad and Tobago
Government of China	Government of Mali	Government of Uganda
Government of Colombia	Government of Mongolia	Government of Ukraine
Government of Comoros	Government of Morocco	Government of United Arab Emirates
Government of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the	Government of Mozambique	Government of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Government of Costa Rica	Government of Myanmar, Republic of the Union of	Government of United States
Government of Cote d'Ivoire	Government of Netherlands	Government of Vanuatu
Government of Croatia	Government of Niger	Government of Zimbabwe
Government of Czech Republic	Government of Nigeria	
Government of Denmark	Government of Niue	
Government of Egypt	Government of North Macedonia	
Government of Finland	Government of Norway	

GAC Observers (9)	
Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU)	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO)	Universal Postal Union (UPU)
Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)	World Broadcasting Unions (WBU)
League of Arab States	World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
Smart Africa	

Attachment 2 - ICANN85 Action Points Compilation

#	Subject Matter	Action Point
1	New gTLDs Next Round	GAC Support Staff to update and recirculate the GAC Early Warnings process document, incorporating remaining comments and seeking consensus for finalization.
2	New gTLDs Next Round	GAC Leadership and Support Staff to consider organizing an intersessional exchange to support GAC readiness and share preparation approaches.
3	GAC Operational Updates	GAC to schedule a session to discuss Nominating Committee contributions during ICANN86.
4	GAC UA-IDN WG	GAC to remain engaged with the UASG and to promote UA as a fundamental component of national digital sovereignty and inclusion strategies.
5	Meeting with the GNSO	GAC members to provide early input to the DNS Abuse PDP charter (deadline 20 March 2026).