ICANN | GAC

Governmental Advisory Committee

Fiscal Year 2024 Additional Budget Request (ABR)

Feasibility Assessment Report on Sign Language Interpretation for ICANN Public Meetings (GAC Report)

Contents

Executive Summary

The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC), in line with the GAC Strategic Objective 2[1] (Effectiveness of the Governmental Advisory Committee) seeking to increase the active and meaningful participation of the members in its deliberations, continues to recognize the value of sign language interpretation (SLI) and sees great potential in the provision of this service at future ICANN Public Meetings. The recent positive feedback received from the ICANN community at ICANN80 in Kigali, reinforces the GAC's belief that such service is a necessary component for greater accessibility and accountability to the multistakeholder community.

The various findings and discussion takeaways gathered in this feasibility assessment report show that sign language interpretation (SLI) is already being adopted by many international organizations.ICANN should demonstrate its own commitment to inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing communities during ICANN Public Meetings.[2]

This report presents some of the data the GAC Human Rights and International Law Working Group (HRILWG) co-chairs gathered for ICANN org's consideration.

Background

In March 2014, the IANA Stewardship Transition[3] was initiated and an ICANN Work Stream 1 (WS1) effort was created to develop mechanisms to enhance ICANN's accountability. WS1 concluded its work in February 2016 and the report of that group was approved by the ICANN Chartering Organizations[4] (including the GAC) and adopted by the ICANN Board in March 2016.

Work Stream 2 Accountability (WS2) volunteers were tasked with addressing a broad range of additional accountability topics for which a timeline for developing solutions and full implementation was expected to extend beyond the initial IANA Stewardship Transition. The WS2 effort concluded its work in June 2018 with the Cross-Community Working Group – Accountability WS2 Final Report[5] and approval by the Chartering Organizations (including the GAC) in November 2018.

With the adoption of the WS2 recommendations by the ICANN Board in November 2019, the ICANN organization (org) and individual community groups have the obligation to undertake the implementation of those recommendations.

The WS2 Final Report included a comprehensive list of nearly 100 individual recommendations, arranged into eight (8) topics, in which the GAC identified several topical areas containing implications for GAC operational implementation of further work including diversity, good faith removal of Board members, human rights, jurisdiction, increased SO-AC accountability and transparency.

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[1] https://gac.icann.org/work-plans/gac-annual-plan-2024-2025.pdf (page 4)

[2] https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=240616987&preview=/240616987/240616989/FY24%20ABR%20Assessment%20Report.pdf (pages 6-7)

[3] https://www.icann.org/iana-transition-fact-sheet

[4] https://community.icann.org/display/acctcrosscomm/Charter

[5] https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/ccwg-acct-ws2-final-24jun18-en.pdf

- **Diversity Recommendations (Recs. 1 of the WS2 Final Report) on Sign Language Interpretation**

Pertaining to the diversity recommendations for GAC implication, the GAC Human Rights and International Law Working Group (GAC HRILWG) took on the oversight of the implementation process.

During the implementation phase, a WS2 community-wide coordination group (WS2 CCG), including the GAC, was formed by ICANN to address community-wide implementation of several diversity and other recommendations.

From the GAC side, the HRILWG co-chairs were tasked with reporting to the GAC on the discussions and decisions made by the WS2 CCG.

During this time, GAC Members agreed that linguistic diversity includes and goes beyond the criteria identified in the WS2 Final Report[6] and determined to submit an additional budget request proposal for a preliminary research and pilot project on sign language interpretation (SLI) at future ICANN Public Meetings.

- **Additional Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24 ABR)**

In January 2023, the GAC Human Rights and International Law Working Group (GAC HRILWG) submitted a Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Additional Budget Request (ABR) on sign language interpretation at ICANN Meetings as a pilot project.[7] The FY24 ABR request sought preliminary research and a subsequent pilot project with a goal to transform the pilot effort into a regular activity the following fiscal year, provided that the test results would be satisfactory.

On 5 May 2023, the ICANN Board of Directors adopted ICANN's FY24–28 Operating and Financial Plan and FY24 Operating Plan and Budget.[8] The Assessment Report and Recommendations for ICANN Board consideration submitted in April 2023, approved the GAC ABR and specifically advised that:
*"This is a recommendation for partial support for the ICANN organization to conduct initial testing and feasibility analysis of a potential sign language interpretation service pilot during ICANN Public Meetings. The estimated support is intended to allow for a feasibility assessment and does not include an initial pilot, if any. Due to the complex resource implications of providing sign language interpretation, ICANN will evaluate this approved exploratory phase as part of its further consideration of launching a pilot phase. ICANN is committed to inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing communities during ICANN Public Meetings and welcomes this proposal from the GAC Human Rights and International Law Working Group (HRILWG). **Working with the Meetings Technical Services team, the Language Services team will consider the required resourcing, training, and testing for such a potential service and develop a feasibility assessment implementing a pilot effort for such a potential service. The GAC HRILWG must provide a feasibility report informed with input from ICANN by 1 July 2024 to abr-reports@icann.org.".[9]***

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https://gac.icann.org/reports/WS2%20Diversity%20Rec.%201.1%20-%20GAC%20Perspective%20Proposal%20(March%202022)%20-%20Final.pdf
7 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TJgOZ99pGyExV2cJ4RvsZoH_LdbJ0KcH/view
8

https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/icann-board-adopts-fy24-28-operatingfinancial-plan-fy24-operating-planbudget-05-05-2023-en
9

https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=240616987&preview=/240616987/240616989/FY24%20ABR%20Assessment%20Report.pdf

The findings of this report provide data and other information collected by the GAC HRILWG co-chairs in support of the required assessment approved by the Board. Unfortunately, the resources allocated for the feasibility study were not used, as explained before, and the GAC HRILWG co-chairs were obliged to gather information on their own, acting in a *pro bono* manner.

The GAC HRILWG co-chairs would like to thank organizations such as the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), the Internet Governance Forum of the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (IGF-DCAD), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the United Nations - Geneva office (UNOG), members of the ICANN community, as well as the Puerto Rican deaf community for their cooperation in providing the information collected in this report, and for helping the GAC to better understand the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community to participate equally in meetings of international organizations.

Assessment Findings and Developments

- **Agreed/Expected activities**

2023

Following the assessment report recommendation, the GAC Human Rights and International Law Working Group (HRILWG) co-chairs, Suada Hadzovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Giacomo Mazzone (World Broadcasting Union) contacted the appointed ICANN organization lead to start the information gathering process.

Below were some of the original main points proposed by the GAC HRILWG co-chairs deemed as essential for the action plan the LST was expected to assess:

1) Consultation with other international institutions having introduced sign language interpretation (SLI) in their main gatherings in order to learn from their experience,
2) Consultation with the ICANN community through a questionnaire or potential other tool, to assess the importance of sign language interpretation (SLI) and to understand if the current set of accessibility measures is considered adequate or not,
3) Consultation with the communities of people with hearing impaired disabilities, in order to get their advice and feedback;
4) Identify, collect and share best practices of technology solutions to improve accessibility at ICANN meetings such as the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for automatic sign language interpretation (SLI).

A preliminary call between the GAC HRILWG co-chairs and the ICANN organization lead took place in December 2023 to start off the planning process and identify, by common agreement, what information would be necessary for the report. The ICANN organization lead expressed doubts about the need for implementing such a new service. This position seemed to be based on the assumption that the English real time transcription (RTT) and translation services in the 6 United Nations (UN) languages and Portuguese provided for ICANN public meetings were sufficient. Additional doubts were raised on which version for sign-language interpretation should be adopted. For instance, should it be English, this would be a duplication of the transcript service already provided.

The GAC HRILWG co-chairs noted that the budget reserved for the additional budget request (ABR) could potentially serve this purpose, and to consider all possible doubts, they recommended coordinating with other international organizations about their decision for providing sign language interpretation (SLI) whilst also contacting individuals and associations of people with hearing impaired disabilities to assess all these issues.

The meeting ended with a couple of action points, on the one hand, the LST would come back to the GAC HRILWG co-chairs with a detailed timeline and action plan, while the co-chairs agreed to start consulting with the community of accessibility experts and with international organizations using sign language interpretation (SLI) to gather more information on the matter, and discuss how this could apply to ICANN.

2024

While awaiting for the action plan from the ICANN organization lead, the HRILWGco-chairs began approaching communities of people with accessibility needs, such as the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD)[10] and Puerto Rico Deaf Community .

Prior to the ICANN79 Meeting (March 2024) , Suada Hadzovic participated in several calls with members of the Puerto Rico ICANN Community, such as Ashley Clemente, Alfredo Calderon and Pablo Rodriguez (.PR) who connected her with students from Colegio San Gabriel as representative of the deaf community in Puerto Rico.

Subsequently, at ICANN79, the ICANN organization lead, members of the Puerto Rican Deaf Community and Alfredo Calderon met to discuss the effort. During the same period, several solicitations were sent to the ICANN organization lead regarding the work plan and possible budget allocations. Around the same time, the GAC HRILWG co-chairs updated the GAC leadership about the projects, seeking advice on further potential action from both groups and noting that the future of the effort is not solely in the GAC's hands but must be a collaborative effort with ICANN staff, which has the ultimate responsibility for the oversight and potential execution of the project.

In lieu of a developed action plan from ICANN staff, the GAC HRILWG co-chairs decided to take action.

The co-chairs coordinated directly with several associations defending the rights of people with disabilities, to provide answers to some of the doubts raised initially by the appointed ICANN organization lead.

After consultations with the World Federation of the Deaf[11], the Internet Governance Forum of the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (IGF-DCAD)[12] represented by , and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) services for accessibility[13], the GAC HRILWG co-chairs empirically ascertained the following:
English transcripts will not solve the issue for the deaf and hard of hearing community, for three main reasons:

1) Non-English readers would be excluded anyway,
2) For English readers, sign language is easier to follow and understand rather than transcript text,

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[10] https://wfdeaf.org/deaf-human-rights-in-times-of-crisis-and-disasters/
[11] https://wfdeaf.org/
[12] https://igf-dcad.org/
[13] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/accessibility

3) The presence of sign language interpreters would allow participants in the room, who cannot express themselves other than in sign language, to intervene and to fully participate in the session they are attending.

Regarding which sign language to use during ICANN Public Meetings, the replies obtained largely indicate a preference to use sign language interpretation (SLI) of the country where the meeting takes place (i.e. German in Hamburg [ICANN78], Spanish in San Juan [ICANN79], etc). This solution would allow local communities, usually unable to attend an ICANN Meeting, to have the opportunity to participate.

These preliminary hypotheses collected through dozens of calls and meetings, had to pass through a reality check.

● **Activities completed/ Data gathered**

As noted above, during the ICANN79 Meeting, the GAC HRILWG co-chair, Suada Hadzovic, organized a meeting with the local deaf community representatives to discuss their needs regarding attending an international event like an ICANN Meeting. Christina Rodriguez, Senior Director, ICANN Language Services, attended part of the meeting with the local deaf community representatives.

The objective of this encounter was to gather additional information for developing the ICANN mandated feasibility report. The deaf community representatives clearly expressed the need for sign language interpretation during ICANN meetings. They indicated having trouble following real time transcription (RTT) due to the fast pace and lack of body language. Deaf and hearing-impaired people have a lot of trouble expressing themselves without a sign language interpreter and are not familiar with ''international sign language''.

This meeting confirmed the preliminary information collected by the GAC HRILWG co-chairs through calls and in-person meetings with organizations specialized in accessibility needs.

● **Follow-up from the ICANN79 Puerto Rico meeting and ICANN80 Disability Questionnaire**

Unfortunately after the fruitful progress during ICANN79, further collaboration with ICANN staff was lacking, but the GAC HRILWG co-chairs continued gathering as much information as possible, although limited, for this feasibility report.

In order to gather additional input for this feasibility report, the GAC HRILWG co-chairs collaborated with the ICANN Meetings team and ICANN Legal to develop a questionnaire[14] distributed to ICANN80 community participants to assess the needs and recommendations of the deaf and hearing impaired community in order to leverage their participation in future ICANN public meetings. The GAC co-chairs are particularly appreciative of the efforts of the ICANN Meetings and ICANN Legal teams for their assistance with the development and circulation of that document. Although the draft survey questions were shared with the ICANN organization lead during the development process, input was received after the survey was distributed. Out of the 1,569 community participants who received the Disability questionnaire, 146 responses were received, and considering the limited time to promote the questionnaire, such data should be considered as a relevant rate.

In terms of sign language interpretation's understanding and requirements from the community, the data gathered shows different results. While a large majority of participants believe that ICANN should improve

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[14] https://tinyurl.com/4mrr4mkx

its accessibility measures, not all of them believe sign language interpretation is the ultimate solution. However, most participants who completed the survey indicated that sign language interpretation (SLI) would be greatly beneficial to participate in an ICANN Meeting. For instance, 50 participants believe they would benefit from sign language interpretation, whether it is for themselves or for someone they know who wishes to participate.

In light of the survey responses and stemming from various discussions of the GAC HRILWG co-chairs with deaf and hearing impaired communities and sign language interpreters, the language of use for sign language interpretation is not universal and may need to be approved depending on the ICANN meeting location.

- **Specific Survey Results**

The results below capture the essence of the survey and reflect the data the GAC HRILWG co-chairs believe should be considered by ICANN.

Q1. Do you think that ICANN is doing its best to guarantee inclusion and accessibility to all kinds of participants ? (mandatory question)
- 96 participants agree
- 36 participants neutral
- 14 participants disagree

Q2. How important is sign language interpretation to your understanding and participation in this meeting? (mandatory question)
- Very important for 49 people,
- Fairly important for 13 people,
- Important for 23 people,
- Slightly Important for 15 people, and
- Not important for 46 people

Q3. Do you require for yourself or do you know people who could benefit from sign language interpretation to effectively participate in this meeting? (mandatory question)
- No for 96 participants
- Yes, for myself for 11 participants
- Yes, for someone I know for 39 participants

Q4. If you, or the participant(s) you know, require sign language interpretation, please specify the preferred sign language? (non mandatory question)
- 15 English
- 7 for American Sign Language
- 1 Russian
- 2 Arabic
- 1 French
- 1 Indian
- 4 Spanish
- 2 International Sign Language
- 1 British Sign Language

Q5. Do you anticipate needing sign language interpretation for the entire duration of the meeting, or only for specific sessions? (non mandatory question)*
- 61 Sign language interpretation for specific sessions
- 57 Sign language interpretation for the full meeting

Most common responses regarding the choice of sessions: Opening Ceremony, ICANN Board, Closing Ceremony.

Current Status and Recent Advancements

- **Consultation with international organizations using sign language interpretation (SLI)**

Based on the positive feedback expressed by the ICANN community (see survey results above), the GAC HRILWG co-chairs recently conducted (August 2024) new consultations with international organizations based in Geneva, such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the United Nations (UNOG), which have used sign language interpretation (SLI) for their meetings.

- The point of contacts for the ITU were:
  - Maximilian Jacobson-Gonzales, Head of Press and TV department
  - Frederic Faugier, Senior Conference Technology Support Officer at International Telecommunication Union
  - Simao Campos, Member of the secretariat of the ITU Standardization Sector in 2002, Counselor for ITU-T Study Group 16[15] (for standardization work on multimedia, including audio and video coding, accessibility/human factors, e-health, ITS, IPTV and digital signage), and ITU-T Focus Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI) for health (FG-AI4H)[16]
- The point of contacts for the UNOG were:
  - Riin Koppel, UNOG Conferences service department
  - Paolo Carta, Technical services in charge of videoconferencing systems
  - Enrico Moresi, Technical services in charge of video systems
  - Michele Zaccheo, Head of UN TV Geneva

The following points/action items were outlined in the initial proposal and discussions with the ICANN organization lead for the feasibility report. Set forth below are the answers collected by the GAC HRILWG co-chairs.

1. Contact the people in charge at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations (Geneva office - "UNOG") having a similar remit as ICANN in order to assess :
   a. If they provide sign language interpretation (SLI) services to their communities
      Feedback gathered:
      - The ITU hires sign language interpretation services but not for all types of meetings.
      - For the UNOG, international sign language interpretation (SLI) services are provided for mandated meetings, if the organizing body has a mandate to provide accessibility services and funding has been allocated.

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[15] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/studygroups/2022-2024/16/
[16] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/focusgroups/ai4h

b. Why have they decided to use sign language interpretation (SLI) in addition to their existing services?
Feedback gathered:
- The ITU realized that caption service has two limitations. Firstly, captioning is difficult to follow for the hard of hearing community because the script moves at a pace that is too fast to follow. Secondly, captioning does not allow hard of hearing participants, who often also have difficulty with oral expression, to intervene in the debate.
- If there is a mandate, the UNOG has to provide the service. The main bodies which have a mandate for accessible meetings are the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People (EMRIP), and some panels of the Human Rights Council. Other committees may ask for sign language interpretation (SLI) within the general budget assigned to each committee. Not all of the hard of hearing delegates can follow captioning, therefore they need sign language interpretation (SLI).

c. Which kind of services they provided prior to introducing sign language interpretation (SLI) services?
Feedback gathered:
- The ITU usually provides interpretations in the 6 UN languages, including captioning service in English. For some years, sign language interpretation (SLI) was introduced for several meetings in addition to several languages interpretation and captioning.
- The UNOG has adopted the same policy as the ITU. They are quite flexible about the number of languages (not necessarily all of the 6 UN languages, sometimes less, as they add another language on request or for special meetings). Regarding captioning and sign language interpretation, certain meetings count more than one captioning service or sign language interpreter, e.g international English and international French).

d. Which sign language interpretation (SLI) language have they adopted and if this choice could change according to the venue where the event takes place?
Feedback gathered:
- The ITU usually provides sign language interpretation (SLI) in international English for meetings in Geneva. However, when the meeting is taking place abroad, the sign language interpretation (SLI) can change, in agreement with the hosting country.
- The UNOG only holds meetings in Geneva and usually only provides international English sign language interpretation (SLI). In the event there are specific requests, their technical services (IT) can add more sign language interpretation (SLI) versions, usually international French, and even a captioning service with additional languages. As per standard practice, the UN provides international sign language interpretation (SLI). For some of the sessions of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the UN also provides national sign language interpretation (SLI), for countries where the official spoken language is one of the UN official languages.

2. Contact the people in charge at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations (Geneva office - "UNOG") having a similar remit as ICANN in order to assess :
Feedback gathered:
- ITU bodies decide if they wish to hire sign language interpretation and for which meetings. Usually this service is provided for all meetings related to accessibility, for instance, the ITU accessibility group. The guidelines for ITU accessibility policies were adopted in 2021 by the ITU Council in the resolution on ITU Accessibility Policy for persons with disabilities. For

meetings outside of Geneva, a decision is taken in agreement with the host country.
- At UNOG, each committee, according to its nature and scope, decides which interpretation services it needs. The organizing UNOG conferences' secretariat, the service provider, defines the need and makes the request for SLI.

    a. What are the criteria to select if an event deserves SLI interpretation or not ?

    b. Which events are selected with sign language interpretation (SLI) services?

Feedback gathered (questions a. and b.):

- The ITU follows the Council's guidelines. In principle, all committees dealing with accessibility issues provide sign language interpretation (SLI), which also applies to Council meetings for topics on the agenda related to accessibility. For meetings abroad, the host country can decide to provide sign language interpretation (SLI), usually at its own expenses

- For the UNOG: See previous answer. Typically meetings that discuss matters related to disabilities and inclusion will require sign language interpretation (SLI). More and more UN Committees would like to make all of their meetings accessible as people with disabilities should be included and have the opportunity to participate in all topics. Nevertheless, funding would be needed for such efforts.

In case of mandated meetings, the budget has already been allocated to the [Division of Conference Management (DCM)](#) for providing such service. For other meetings, Secretariats would need to pay for the service.

    c. Is the cost for sign language interpretation (SLI) afforded by the institution or the local host ?

Feedback gathered:

- For the ITU, only the meetings in Geneva are funded by the ITU itself. Funding of services for other meetings are negotiated with the host country.

- UNOG holds all its meetings in its premises in Geneva. This question does not apply.

The questions below were only submitted to the United Nations Geneva office (UNOG).

3. Gather additional input from the people in charge at the UNOG, and ask:

    a. If and how UNOG have trained the sign language interpreters to familiarize themselves with the technical language used during the meetings, and whether they have to train a different team each time for each language ?

Feedback gathered:

The Division of Conference Management (DCM) of the United Nations office in Geneva only recruits accredited [International Sign interpreters](#). For national sign interpreters, the DCM relies on the recommendations of the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) and specific country deaf and hard of hearing associations. Information about the meeting is shared beforehand with interpreters to familiarize themselves with the specific vocabulary. The DCM has been recruiting from the same pool of interpreters for several years, gaining in experience and knowledge over the years.

    b. If they prefer hiring the same team after having provided a single training?

Feedback gathered:

DCM doesn't train any sign interpreters specifically. The UNOG only shares reports, statements, meeting agendas, and works with accredited sign language interpreters (see 3.a).

c. Do they consider this as a relevant or a minor issue ?
    Feedback gathered:
    The most important is that sign language interpreters should be experienced and accepted by the deaf community.

d. What is the feedback they collected through their experiences?
    Feedback gathered:
    Deaf and hard of hearing delegates appreciate that sign language interpretation (SLI) is provided for meetings.

e. What about meetings where sign language interpretation (SLI) is not foreseen, attendees ask for such services ? Is this a sufficient reason to provide sign language interpretation?
    Feedback gathered:
    This is not a sufficient request for UNOG to provide sign language interpretation (SLI). An official request, at least a couple of months prior to the meeting, should be submitted.

f. For meetings of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are additional sign language interpretation and language translations provided, or only for the UN 6 languages.
    Feedback gathered:
    Only international sign language interpretation (SLI) is provided since a large audience follows UNOG meetings remotely. Nothing comparable to ICANN localized meetings

g. How many captioning or sign language interpretation (SLI) services can be provided simultaneously ?
    Feedback gathered:
    UNOG is equipped with up to three (3) simultaneous captioning and sign language interpretation services in English, Spanish and French.

h. When did UNOG start introducing sign language interpretation (SLI) for their meetings?
    Feedback gathered:
    UNOG introduced sign language interpretation five to seven years ago.

i. Is there a targeted question in the UNOG meeting registration form regarding sign language interpretation (SLI) needs?
    Feedback gathered:
    There is not a targeted question in the registration form, however, the secretariat for each Committee within UNOG decides whether to ask meeting participants or not. Nevertheless, any request for additional interpretation, captioning or sign language interpretation (SLI) needs to be communicated to the secretariat, at least a couple of months prior to meeting, to ensure interpreters' availability (i.e pool of 20 interpreters hired for UNOG).
    For regular meetings, such as the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) ones, when sign language interpretation is confirmed, only if required otherwise, meetings will automatically have sign language interpretation (SLI) provided.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The original deadline for delivery of this assessment/feasibility report was 1 July 2024. However, due to the accumulated delays for the project, and the need to collect, assess survey results and to prepare the report text and assure its review by GAC leadership and members prior to submission, a request to extend the delivery deadline was shared. Additional updates to ICANN staff served to extend the submission of this report to early October. The GAC appreciates ICANN staff in awaiting the delivery of this report.Despite the difficulties with collaboration in this initial phase of the work, the GAC HRILWG co-chairs wish to bring, to the extent possible, the pilot project to fruition through future productive collaboration with the ICANN staff. Therefore, the co-chairs agreed among themselves to continue to reach out to sign language interpreters and the deaf and hard of hearing community, with the help of the local host(s), for the upcoming ICANN82 Seattle meeting, and/or the ICANN83 Prague meeting with the understanding that these efforts will need to be coordinated with ICANN staff.

Based on the assessment of the results from these subsequent planned experiences, the GAC HRILWG co-chairs and members, and ICANN staff will have to discuss how best to reach the implementation phase. Set forth below are the action items the GAC HRILWG co-chairs discussed leading up to the ICANN82 Seattle Meeting and/or ICANN83 Prague Meeting.

Action Item 1 : HRILWG co-chairs (Suada Hadzovic and Giacomo Mazzone) to reach out to:
1. The ICANN82 local host, and
2. The local deaf and hard of hearing community to engage in the ICANN82 Meeting and identify sign language interpreters,
regarding possible sign language interpretation (SLI) for the Welcome Ceremony. Following the discussions, should this be implementable, contact Christina Rodriguez (initial ICANN organizational lead for the FY24 additional budget request feasibility report project),

Action Item 2: Local deaf and hard of hearing community and sign language interpreters association (Seattle, Washington) to provide budgeting elements for participation of the community and sign language interpretation during the ICANN82 Welcome Ceremony, such as cost for sign language interpreters, number of interpreters for the session, and other potential expenditures (transportation, particular/tailored assistance, etc.).

Action item 3: Based on the assessment of the ICANN82 Seattle meeting, and/or of ICANN83 Prague meeting, HRILWG co-chairs and members to discuss potential ICANN guidelines on sign language interpretation (SLI) at ICANN Meetings to develop accessibility guidelines, to be submitted to the Board for approval and implementation for the years ahead.

Action item 4: Consider introducing a third party, in a complaint regulating role, to escalate possible contentions between ABR proponents and identified ICANN organization lead(s) in order to bring the mandated project to fruition.

Conclusion

The GAC appreciates that this effort is a unique opportunity to expand the scale and scope of its diversity and inclusion efforts at public meetings to the hard of hearing community. It is hoped that all ICANN staff will support further efforts in this area and help maintain a degree of momentum that ensures careful consideration and solution to practical and resource challenges that will result in an effective and productive sign language regime in ICANN's future.

Consulted Sources

- World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) - *Point of contact: Alexander Bloxs, Human Rights officer.* https://wfdeaf.org/deaf-human-rights-in-times-of-crisis-and-disasters/
- Internet Governance Forum of the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (IGF-DCAD) - *Points of contact: Muhammad Shabir, chairperson and Judith Hellerstein, executive director* https://igf-dcad.org/
- International Telecommunications Union (ITU) https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/accessibility/
- United Nations-Geneva Office (UNOG) https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/

Reference Documents

- Sign Language Around the World - https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/sign-language/
- FY24 ABR Assessment Report and Recommendations for ICANN Board Consideration (April 2023)
- GAC Perspective Proposal on Diversity Criteria for the WS2 Community Coordination Group consideration (March 2022)
- GAC Annual Plan 2024-2025

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