CHAIR'S REPORT

THE ICANN HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENTAL MEETING

BARCELONA, 22 OCTOBER 2018

by

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It was an honor to host this 4th High-Level Governmental meeting in Barcelona on 22 October 2018 during the ICANN63 Annual General Meeting. Despite the very busy international schedule (ITU PP18 in Dubai, IGF2018 meeting in Paris), the meeting attracted 127 high-level delegations from all over the world (111 governmental delegations, and 16 IGO delegation including the ITU Secretary General). I would like to thank all the high-level delegates who were present in Barcelona, for their active participation.

It was a privilege for me to chair this first high-level governmental meeting since the IANA transition which occurred in October 2016. ICANN's governance model has evolved to the so-called Empowered Community model that fosters the participation of all stakeholders including governments, as well as enhancing the transparency and accountability of ICANN.

The dialogue and transparency of decision making processes are key in the context of the challenges, the Internet and our societies, are facing today. Spain is an open country that is not afraid of the challenges of the future; and is keen on helping build bridges between Internet stakeholders and helping tackle the new demands raised by the evolution of the Internet. This is why we were pleased to host this important meeting in Barcelona.

Today, Governments and International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) are able to play a more active role in ICANN. ICANN is a technical organization, but Government and IGO contributions through the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) in providing advice to the Board, participating in the empowered community according to the new ICANN's bylaws and in the participation in ICANN's policy development processes (PDP) are critical. The large number of governments (178 members) and IGOs (36 observers) involved in the GAC, reflects this growing awareness and interest in the above-mentioned roles of the GAC. The global Internet Governance discussions are not only focused on the management of the Internet's critical resources, they are tackling fundamental public policy issues (freedom of speech, security, privacy, greater equality amongst citizens, fight against cybercrime, promotion of diversity). We, as governments, are responsible for securing these fundamental rights of our citizens. The digital technologies help the world to be a better place, but in the meantime, disrupt many of our economic and social models. This is why we should address these new challenges trough a multistakeholder approach in different fora, where governments should be playing a key role.

This meeting has offered a great opportunity to governments, and international and regional organisations to discuss the technical, legal, and geopolitical challenges that ICANN faces, as it works to fulfill its mission, in an always expanding and overarching changing Internet ecosystem. It was also a good opportunity for getting appropriate update about ICANN's priorities and strategic trends in the post IANA Transition era.

The first session tackled the impact of the growing legislative and regulatory activities. Our related discussions underlined, on the one hand, the necessity for governments to be more active in developing legislative and regulatory texts related to digital issues, and on the other hand, the potential unintentional impacts of these new legislative and regulatory initiatives on ICANN's work. The role of governments is an important issue, with their specific responsibility for public interest and public policies for the sake of their citizens. Furthermore, we realized that governments throughout the world need to allocate sufficient resources in order to foster a dialogue with other Internet stakeholders.

Lastly, everybody understands the need for governments to actively participate within ICANN in a multistakeholder dialogue. We need to define our objectives, which is to make sure that the Internet remains stable and secure, is open to the population worldwide and to innovation. We should also make sure that we respect the diversity of the different cultures and people, as well as the different categories and roles of stakeholders.

The second session of the meeting was related to some thematic challenges (personal data protection, cybersecurity and cybercrime). These issues were recognized as being complex, and interrelated, and all the participants of the HLGM concurred that better solutions to these challenges will come from a multistakeholder dialogue and cooperation between actors. Different regions already started to have legislations and regulations related to data protection, and privacy, and others are just in preparation. It was underlined how important it is for ICANN to engage early enough in a dialogue with governments in such processes in order to highlight the technical role of ICANN in the coordination of the Internet unique identifiers and explain the technical facts to avoid any unintended repercussions on ICANN's remit.

The third session of the meeting addressed the evolution of the Internet technologies and their impacts on ICANN's work. It is now obvious that governments have to play a more active role in shaping the future of the Internet and its growth because of the need to have more trust its use for the benefit of the world.

We also heard in the session that such growth comes with particular challenges. A number of those technologies which were mentioned during this session, could present some current challenges to the Internet, such as the growth of number of Internet devices, 5G technologies, and the Internet of things. However, some of them also present potential opportunities. I was glad to hear a number of delegations intervene during this session. They raised, not only the need for us to take a closer look at technologies such as Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence, and alternative addressing, but also what those could mean for the growth of the Internet. While taking a closer look at them, we need to make sure we also recognized the potential challenges of these technological solutions, doing so in a concerted and prudent method as well using a

multistakeholder approach. It was of great interest to the participants to follow up on a discussion on the potential impact of these new technologies on ICANN and on the DNS Ecosystem.

The fourth Session was dedicated to the measures taken to combat the digital divide especially in underserved regions and the role of ICANN in developing a more inclusive Internet on a technical level.

Here, the participants recognized that a lot of work has been undertaken. Globally, over 50% of the world population has been connected on the Internet, but still, we need to connect the other 50% to the network. Useful suggestions were made, both in terms of the role of ICANN and the role of governments and the private sector. ICANN has done tremendous work in IDNs deployment and cybersecurity of the DNS, but a more constructive and assertive approach is required on its part. The governments should play a concerted role in adopting the right process for facilitating collaboration among the different stakeholders, in ensuring the laying the digital infrastructure, the technical capacity building in cooperation with other players, bringing the trust, securing the networks and adopting the right security policies, and finally fostering innovation. The only way to succeed in implementing this digital agenda is through a better cooperation between governments, private sector, academia and technical community.

Some participants referred, to their digital economy discussion, to the United Nations Sustainable Development agenda 2030 and shared some national success stories in putting their countries on the right track for the digital agenda.

In conclusion, all delegations underlined the necessity to foster the multistakeholder dialogue in all aspects in order for everyone to take advantage of the Internet's growth and to preserve an open, secure and stable non-fragmented Internet.

Finally, I would like to deeply thank the GAC Chair, Manal Ismail, the GAC leadership and all the members and observers who helped us in building a robust agenda, whilst keeping in mind the need for a good interaction during the meeting. I would like to thank all the presenters who helped us set the scene and shed light on specific issues and initiatives. Lastly, I want to express

my deep appreciation to all my colleagues from the governments and IGOs who attended, despite their very busy international schedule, and actively contributed to this 4th High Level Governmental Meeting.

 I also want to thank ICANN's President and CEO and his team for their support to make this meeting successful. Our appreciation also goes to the ICANN's Board Chair, Board members and to ICANN community members for their active participation in the meeting.