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ICANN71 | Virtual Policy Forum - The Post-Pandemic Future of ICANN Public Meetings  
Thursday, June 17, 2021 - 16:30 to 17:30 CEST

RIA OTANES: Sally, we're right at start time. Would you like to start the recording? Would you like to get the recording started?

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Yes.

**[ This meeting is being recorded ]**

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Perfect. Thank you. Good morning, good afternoon and good evening. Welcome, everyone. My name is Sally Newell Cohen, and I am the Senior Vice President of Global Communications at ICANN org.

Thank you for joining the session today on the post-pandemic future of ICANN meetings. Clearly this is a topic of interest we have. Over 250 participants at the moment and climbing.

So ICANN meetings, public meetings particularly, are central to the multistakeholder model are an important venue to advance

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*Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.*

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our work, but COVID-19 and the pandemic has impacted us and our ability to meet in person far longer than any one of us could have anticipated.

While there's always been a virtual component to ICANN Public Meetings, we now have five meetings' worth of innovations and learning to draw from as we navigate the future of our public meetings.

The Board will soon decide whether to hold ICANN72 virtually or as a hybrid meeting with both in-person and virtual components. To make its decision, the Board is drawing from several different inputs. This session is one of those inputs.

Another is the survey that ICANN org recently conducted to determine individual comfort and tolerance for gatherings among ICANN meeting participants and to investigate the possibility of organizing ICANN72 as a hybrid meeting. So during this session Nick Tomasso of ICANN org will share results from the survey.

The survey gives us good insights into the comfort level and the desire to return to the in-person meetings. But of course there's more to discuss. And there's more to consider. In fact, the topic of returning to in-person meetings was widely discussed and

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explored during several different sessions this week, and so I know we're looking forward to hearing what some of those conversations were and the dialogues were as we go through the session today because this is an opportunity to continue the dialogue.

Before we start, I'm going to briefly explain the format for this session. The session is being interpreted in real-time in the standard United Nations language -- languages of Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.

For the best experience, we recommend that you select the language you speak or listen to by clicking on the Interpretation icon located in the Zoom toolbar.

More details about this are available on the session page, and a link is available in the chat.

So let's look at your agenda for the next hour. We'll begin with opening remarks from Maarten Botterman and Goran Marby. Next, Nick Tomasso will review the survey results and the situation as it stands today. Then we'll go into the community dialogue with comments and questions. And then of course we'll have closing remarks. And that's what we'll cover in the next 58 minutes.

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So now I'd like to hand the floor to Maarten Botterman, the chair of the ICANN Board.

Maarten.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Thank you, Sally.

Welcome, everybody. Deep respect. This is the last session of a very long week; again, virtual. And I know West Coast of U.S. and of the Americas have experienced some hardship, and I know that Australia is now going into the night. This is one of the aspects that we are all aware of, next to not being in the same room.

So on behalf of the Board, I'd like to thank the community for the constructive discussions that we've had and we continue to have on the topic of the future of our public meetings. The Board's commitment to transparency includes continuing this conversation and taking this input into account for our decision. We all want to get back to face to face as soon as reasonably practical and safe.

I continue to be impressed with the good work of what's happened up to today, and I recognize that in-person meetings

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are foundational to the multistakeholder model. Yet we have demonstrated that we can continue on.

What we miss most are the casual interactions, the networking, the interpersonal interactions that contribute so much to strengthening consensus building.

So as Sally said, in July we are faced and we need to take that decision, difficult decision as to and how to proceed with ICANN72, virtually planned to be held in Seattle.

Like with the Cancun decision, we stand for uncharted territory, and we will need to take all the aspect, variable into account. Important to weigh many different factors in coming to the decision but should say we will not drive the decision. The budget in place -- is in place to service the community in face-to-face meeting when such would be possible. But in particular, it's important to understand the possibility whether and how the community can participate, is able to travel to the United States, and may or may not elect to go there for different reasons relating to the pandemic, personal or professional.

And it's important to us that meetings are and can be inclusive. So a hybrid meeting or a meeting in person will need to support

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the multistakeholder model in allowing good representation of all stakeholders.

So when there's a limitation of access for people from some regions, that will certainly be a part of our considerations, whether we believe safe and balanced stakeholder participation is possible.

We wish to respect everybody's choices and continue to hold an ICANN meeting that fulfills our community's needs and expectations, whether or not that's a meeting that includes some form of in-person presence.

So for this reason we very well -- very much welcome, also, the results of the survey and the ongoing dialogue, like we have today, like will -- is taking place with SO and AC leaders for us to determine, as we consider and -- whether we can or cannot go to Seattle in person in a hybrid setting or whether we need to be virtual again.

So thank you for being here and thank you. Looking forward to your participation.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you very much, Maarten.

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Next, I'd like to turn to Goran Marby, President and CEO of ICANN.

Goran, the floor is yours.

GORAN MARBY:

Thank you. Thank you, Sally. And I also really want to thank the community for all their contributions and thoughts and for helping with the survey. It's been -- I had a lot of contacts with many during this week, and I think one of the things that strikes me is how thoughtful many of the comments are. You clearly understand the complexities of this issue.

I mean, I am, together with the rest of the org, at one point really looking forward to face-to-face meeting as soon as practical and safe, because I think we all agree that our top priority must be the health and safety of staff and participants. There cannot be any more important factor than that.

I mean, and why this is a particularly -- particularly different decision that we're facing, maybe even more than the previous five meetings, because of the imbalance of vaccines, travel restrictions, border policies, and the ever-changing nature of spread of COVID itself.

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I mean, it is -- As Maarten talked about, the Board will have to balance the importance of the global representation in all aspects of ICANN activities, including attendance at the ICANN Public Meeting, with the important role of the work. And the part of the building relationships and the facilitating are signs of progress in community work.

I mean, we stand, as always, committed to continue to provide as a good remote participation experience for meeting. In a way, the ICANN meetings have always been remote as well. We always had a lot of remote participants into the meeting. But what I think that we also -- we have to be honest to learn that we learned a lot during the last year how we can also enhance remote participation during when we have a face-to-face meeting. And that's something we should not forget.

And during some of the discussions this week, there's been a lot of suggestions about how we can even further do that, if we go back to a face-to-face meeting.

So the -- the -- I'm going to come back to the health and safety questions. When we -- Maarten actually said something that I was thinking about just today. Maarten said in a call that if we would have had a sort of poll about the -- the meeting in Mexico last year,

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we might have ended up that the community wanted to go. Two weeks later, nobody wanted to go anywhere.

I'm not saying that as a -- saying that this is something that we did right and someone else did wrong. It's not about that. It's I think the collective knowledge about the virus has increased a lot over the last one and a half years. So -- but there are still so many unknowns.

But one thing, just to finalize this, is that ICANN has to be open, inclusive and global in their aspirations and participation. And we have to remain committed to that sort of fundamental feature of our multistakeholder model. And we have to sort of balance that when it comes to the benefits of in-person gatherings for (indiscernible) consensus and networks with the disadvantages of having a smaller number of attendees and fewer based on the regions.

So that's why we do the survey and that's why we have this discussion with you, because we really want to hear more about all the thoughts you have going back to potential face-to-face meetings.

With that, I would like to leave over to Nick Tomasso to talk a little bit more about the actual survey results.

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Thank you very much.

NICK TOMASSO:

Thank you very much, Goran.

Kim, if you wouldn't mind putting the slides up in the room.

My name is Nick Tomasso. I head up ICANN's Global Meeting Operations team. And I am going to blow right past this because Maarten and Goran addressed this more eloquently than I ever could. So let's get to the numbers.

Would you go to the next slide, please.

This is a geographic breakdown of the 665 people who responded to the survey. We had a high 32% response rate, just showing how much interest there is in this topic. The map to the right shows the average percentage of regional attendance at ICANN meetings, so you can see that the survey responses are spread at approximately the same rate with perhaps a lower representation from APAC and a higher representation from North America.

The solid blue bars are community members; hash marks are Board and staff.

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Next slide, please, Kim, please.

So here is a -- how the numbers break down by group. We have 514 people, general meeting attendees and SO/AC members, and 151 board and staff who took the survey.

Next slide.

This chart shows the meeting experience level of respondents, which as you can see represents a broad range. This is the last time we'll examine the respondents as a whole. From this point forward, we'll show responses only from community members, which is the most significant part of this presentation. The Board and staff will be removed from the analysis.

Next slide, please.

Here we examine the community's thinking on holding an in-person meeting under various conditions, with blue being yes, gray being neutral, and orange being no. Note that we used only people who self-identified as members of an SO or AC for the question on limited SO/AC member attendance.

So you agree with ICANN holding an in-person meeting under the following conditions: Reduced global diversity. 54% said yes,

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23% were neutral on this and 23% said no. Limited attendance by SO/AC members: 55% yes, 22% neutral, 23% no.

Limited attendance due to COVID vaccine requirements: 64% answered that yes, 16 were neutral, 20% were no.

A reduced schedule, if you will, 58% said that was okay. And advance sign-up of sessions and the possibility of limited seats, 64% okay, 19% neutral, 16% no.

Next slide, please.

Here we took a deeper dive by geographic region on the question of diversity of potential attendees. As you can see, the responses are relatively even as a percentage by region. The number off to the right of each line is the number of respondents.

The question is: Do you agree with ICANN holding a in-person meeting with reduced global diversity of in-person attendance due to COVID restrictions?

As you saw in the last chart, 54% answered yes, but here's the breakdown by region.

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Africa was 55% yes, 18% neutral, 20% -- 27% no. APAC at 49, 26 and 26, respectively. Europe at 51, 27 and 22. LAC came in at 59 - - excuse me, 49% yes, 15% neutral, and 36% no. And North America, 63% yes, 20% neutral, and 17% no.

Next slide, please.

Here we took a deeper dive by geographic region on the question of limited attendance of SO/AC members. The question is: Do you agree with ICANN holding an in-person meeting with limited in-person attendance by my SO or AC?

55% yes overall. Africa, 56, 26 neutral, and 18 no. APAC at 63%, 20%, and 18%. Europe, 47 yes, 24 neutral, 29 no. LAC 45 yes, 32 neutral, 23 no. And North America, 58% yes, 19% neutral, 22% no.

Next slide, please.

And here we took a deeper dive by geographic region on the question of limited attendance if vaccinations are required. So the question is: Do you agree with ICANN holding an in-person meeting with limited in-person attendance due to COVID-19 vaccination requirements?

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As you saw a few charts back, 64% yes was the overall average, but you can see the -- drill-down here by region on the response to vaccines being required: Africa 52% yes, 15, and 33 no. APAC 59, 25, and 16. Europe, 66, 14, and 20. LAC, 53, 23, and 23. And North America, 73% yes, 12% neutral, 16% no.

Please go to the next slide.

Here we shift from should ICANN run a meeting to are you willing to attend a meeting in person under various attendance restrictions and risk mitigation protocols?

Global diversity, 60% said yes, 25% said not sure, and 15% said no.

Limited attendance by my SO/AC members, 56% yes, 27 neutral, and 17 no.

And then the rest of the items on this -- on this slide are what we've been talking about for the last 15 months. Basically COVID-19 risk mitigation techniques, and you can see they all fall within the seventies and sixties. So we'll go on to the next slide, please.

How important are the following safety protocols in your decision to attend an ICANN Public Meeting in person? And basically, we

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looked at the risk mitigation protocols that are most important to the community. Really no surprises here. The blues are very important and important, and the orange is somewhat important, and the red is not important at all. I won't spend a whole a lot of time on this slide. I think it's self-explanatory.

Next slide, please.

So here is a view of the community's willingness to attend an in-person meeting. 75% said they would, assuming that travel restrictions to the U.S. were lifted. That would have to be a given. But we thought it important to understand the responses by geographic region here again.

So the total was 75% yes. Africa came in at 94% yes, APAC at 64%, Europe at 67%, LAC at 80% and North America at 81%.

Would you please go to the next slide. Thank you.

And finally, for the 128 people who indicated that they were unsure or would not attend, here's the breakdown of the reasons given. Not surprisingly, health and safety concerns and quarantine or travel restrictions were two high up on the list.

Go to the next slide, please.

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Here we'll get away from the numbers and get into a little bit more of what we need to consider moving forward. As everyone knows, there are currently travel restrictions among countries, the U.S. being one of them. We do know that visa availability could be somewhat of a problem with many embassies and consulates around the world operating at reduced capacity. There's varying vaccine availability around the world and varying COVID-19 infection rates. These were all factors for consideration.

Some had asked why a mid-July decision date. We need time, we all need time to make our travel arrangements. And specifically for the funded travelers, acquiring visas and booking flights is an issue. And also we have venue and service provider contractual obligations to think about.

The term "hybrid meeting" has become very fashionable this last six months or so. And what I thought I would do is take a moment to explain what ICANN thinks a hybrid meeting is. It's a meeting that embraces a more equitable approach to the different interaction types of in-person and virtual participation. We'll continue to use our existing enhanced participation tools that have been very well developed over the course of the last five meetings. We'll look to improving moderation of sessions, ensuring equal participation by virtual attendees and in-person

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attendees. And we'll do better integration of in-person and virtual presenters.

And if you take us to the next slide, Kim, I will do a quick wrap-up by saying thank you very much. You know where we are. You know that the Board is looking at this and Goran is looking at this.

And I will turn it back to Sally. Thank you very much.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN:

Thank you very much, Nick. Thanks also to Goran and Maarten for framing this conversation. I think there's a lot to take in, there's a lot to think about. And the most important aspect of the session now is to hear from you, the community. So we're going to move to that portion of our session for the next 40 minutes, if you will. To -- here's how it will work. You can join the virtual queue in one of two ways. If you'd like to make a comment verbally, please click on the Raise Hand icon at the bottom of your screen and you'll automatically go into the speakers' queue. When it's your turn to speak I will introduce you and then kindly unmute your mic and then take the floor.

Before stating your comment or question, please state your name, where you're from, and who you're representing or

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affiliated with if that's applicable. Remember to speak clearly and at a reasonable pace for our interpreters.

If you're unable to voice your comment, please write it in the chat pod in the proper form that is noted in the chat, and then my colleague Ria Otañes will then read your comments.

So I see that we already have people in the chat. I believe I saw Sebastien Bachollet first. So please go ahead and unmute your mic.

SEBASTIEN BACHOLLET: My name is Sebastien Bachollet. I am the chair of EURALO. I was, in 2013, president of a working group regarding the future of the ICANN meetings, and I believe that the result of that study was extremely interesting because it shows the necessity to go back to meetings and meeting together.

Some people might not be able to travel to the U.S, and I feel for them, but I have two proposals that would enable to diminish this issue. It's not going to be able to replace the fact that we'll all be able to travel, but we're in a world that will never go back for everybody traveling like we used to do.

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We could use some robot. That would be quite expensive, but why not. And the second proposal would be for people that are on location to be in charge of someone who couldn't travel. It wouldn't be replacing that person, but the representative would say, "Someone that I represent would like to say something, would like to say that" and that would enable us to not only have technical tools but to have some physical presence.

Thank you very much.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you very much, Sebastien. Interesting ideas. I appreciate that.

The next person I see in the queue is Manal Ismail.

MANAL ISMAIL: Thank you very much, Sally. And Manal Ismail, GAC chair. And allow me to share a few highlights from GAC discussions throughout the week.

Of course everyone is longing for face-to-face meetings with a long list of doubtless advantages, particularly with the GAC's unique situation with 80 new participants since our last face to face.

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That said, and in dealing with the current situation, it was noted that we shouldn't rush become to in person, running the risk of increasing inequalities or splits by region and that the steady state will probably settle on a hybrid model but with remote participation being an individual choice rather than an obligation.

With that in mind, two things specifically were highlighted: Equality and unity or integration, noting that we need a technical platform that allows for treating all participants equally, irrespective of their joining in person or online.

Suggestions included having a screen in the room that brings remote participants into the room, and also thinking of maybe a request -- requests for the floor being managed online to ensure automatic fairness in interlacing one queue of in-person and online participants.

Of course real-time interpretation is a priority, but I was assured that in a hybrid model, this would not be affected. And also, there were suggestions of maybe having meetings held face to face or, I should say, hybrid and others held fully virtual, also to reduce ICANN's carbon footprint.

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We didn't discuss the time zone issue, but I believe this will be an issue that is difficult to overcome totally. And we continue to discuss the effect of a steady state hybrid model on GAC specifics, such as the quorum, communique drafting, and ultimately GAC operating principles.

I'm sorry; this sounded longer than I intended. I'll stop here. Thank you very much.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Manal, thank you. That was a number of great suggestions. I have a follow-up question for you, if I might, and that has to do with quorum, and you mentioned it briefly. So is it possible to establish quorum in a hybrid model for the GAC?

MANAL ISMAIL: So this is exactly what we're discussing and seeing if there will be ultimately a need to also change our operating principles, because we have specific requirements in the operating principles. So should this continue to be a permanent situation, we need to look into this as well. Under discussion.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you. Thank you for that.

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I'm going to go to an online question, if -- Ria, if I could ask you to read the one that you have.

RIA OTANES: Thank you, Sally. We have a comment and a question from James Bladel: As I mentioned during a plenary session, ICANN is coping but not thriving, by being 100% remote. We should start the process of returning face to face.

His question is: If ICANN decided to have some face-to-face attendance in Seattle, how quickly can those venue arrangements be booked, announced, et cetera?

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: That's a good question.

Nick Tomasso, if I could point to you for that answer?

NICK TOMASSO: Yes, you may. I'd be glad to answer that.

James, the Seattle venue was booked long ago, as we book our meeting venues long in advance of the meeting; typically, two or three years. So the arrangements are already in place. There would be nothing that would have to be done unusual about

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having a in-person meeting in Seattle, should the decision be made to do that.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Fantastic. Thank you so much, Nick.

The next hand that I see is Alejandra Reynoso, ccNSO. Go ahead.

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO: Thank you, Sally. This is Alejandra Reynoso, ccNSO chair, for the record, and I want to share some views from the ccNSO Council on this topic.

We have a split opinion at the moment. Many are very hopeful to restart with face-to-face meetings and are in favor of starting somewhere, even if they won't be able to travel themselves.

They do request that ICANN rules for attendance should be fair. For example, if there is a requirement on have to be vaccinated to be able to attend, then all vaccines should be accepted, for example.

Others believe it is too soon; that we should wait to be more fair with the community. Some companies have killed travel budgets for the year, so they won't be able to travel. Others have

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concerned about the drop of people in the U.S. taking vaccines versus the rest of the world. And also that if we do make this go forward, then it would be some kind of message that rich countries can go ahead and maybe some divisions of countries would be widened, and since there are countries that don't have vaccines, so it's too soon.

Others do think if ICANN is able to say with a very high degree of confidence that at the time that they make the decision more than 50% of the usual participants will be able to attend, then maybe they could consider it.

And there are other comments regarding vaccines, seeing if ICANN has considered talking to the U.S. government to be able to provide vaccines, for example, for participants, like the Johnson & Johnson that is one shot.

And that's it. Thank you very much.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you so much, Alejandra. It's great feedback and all important points to consider.

The next person I see whose hand is up is Bruna Martins Dos Santos. Go ahead and unmute.

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BRUNA MARTINS DOS SANTOS: Hi. Thank you, Sally. My name is Bruna Santos, and I am the Noncommercial Stakeholder Group chair. We just had our membership meeting at ICANN71, and we had the chance to discuss this topic. And while I cannot say that this is the consensus position for the SG, the majority of our members did feel that the decision of making ICANN72 as a face-to-face meeting might be a little premature. And we have some comments around the design of the survey. We did feel as if it was like a wish list or something of the sorts of, and it might -- it should have been more concrete in terms of what could be done and what should we be doing for the near future.

But talking about virtual meetings in the future, we also do agree that they might have been more democratic in terms of including the ones who are not able to travel to on-site meetings, but this is also a crucial moment for the future of our community and the multistakeholder model. And by that, I mean that the reasons that moves us should not be more than just waiting to meet on-site regardless. And now more than ever, we need be compromised on what should be a good hybrid meeting that considers equal footing to the ones who are joining online and also all of the time zone restrictions we have been discussing for the past months.

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And just to wrap up, I would also like to highlight that it is important for us to consider meetings for everyone, not just the ones residing in countries who have lifted the COVID restrictions. It might be it's still also too soon to understand what will be the travel restrictions in October for everybody, whether or not all sorts of vaccines will be accepted in the U.S. or any future host country, or even if vaccine passports or certification will be valid.

Added to that, I think it's the fact that now more than ever, a lot of the diplomatic representations are closed in high-risk areas. I'm residing in Brazil and we don't have open diplomatic representations from Germany or even Switzerland right now so that is a difficulty and might be for moving forward with visa issues and so on.

So to wrap up, maybe just one question: I would like to ask if ICANN org has considered conducting a global assessment on what will be the travel restrictions for our members coming October if everything is changing? And if you do know, what are the differences of me coming from Brazil or somebody from, let's say, Canada will be facing in October? So that will be my question for you. Thank you all.

GORAN MARBY:

Bruna, can I answer that question?

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SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Please, yes.

GORAN MARBY: It's actually quite impossible to do it right now. I mean, I think today or yesterday, the Europe lifted its travel restrictions to the - from the U.S. On the other hand, if my understanding you correct, if you're not a resident in the U.S., you cannot travel to the U.S. by presidential orders.

Unfortunately, it's hard for us to ask the question because I think everybody is asking the question. It is a very fluid situation. And I agree you with, Bruna, this is the -- this is one of the -- the hard things with all of this; that we might make a decision now that will be impossible -- you know, it will be -- I mean, three months down the road, the world could look very different.

But as I said before, I mean, it's not only the travel restrictions. It's also what you talked about, what we have talked about, what Maarten talked about, is that how do you create a good hybrid meeting, whatever we're going to call it, so people feel included in that meeting, so it doesn't become just a meeting for the people who is very close to the region -- to that region we have the meeting or even the city we have the meeting.

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This is -- As I said, this is not an easy one. But I think you understand, Bruna, it is hard to validate the situation when it comes to travel restrictions around the world right now.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thanks very much, Goran, for answering that.

And Bruna, thank you also for the suggestions and the feedback on the survey itself. Appreciate it.

I am going to go next to Ria for at least one of the online comments, and then Fred Baker, you'll be next.

Ria, go ahead, please.

RIA OTANES: Thank you, Sally.

We have a comment from Ching Chiao: I assume we can learn something from NBA or any U.S. university that is open again this fall.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

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RIA OTANES: Sure. I assume we can learn something from NBA or any U.S. university that is open again this fall.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Good point. Good point. Okay. Thank you for that.

There's a variety of inputs. I think those will be great examples of something to look at, but there's a variety of inputs that our team looks at to try to assess and to look at best practices as well. So that's good feedback.

Thank you for that.

Fred Baker, the floor is yours.

FRED BAKER: Thank you.

So Jennifer sent a note last night asking what the opinions of the various groups are. And as the chair of the Root Server System Advisory Committee, I forwarded the question and have fielded a number of responses. I can't describe this as a consensus because we have -- there weren't enough voices that responded, and we don't really have a way to measure that.

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But everyone that responded said that they would be willing to return to have face-to-face meetings if the participants are fully vaccinated. There wasn't really an opinion expressed about so what do you do with masks and this, that and the other. But people would be willing to attend if everyone in the room is fully vaccinated.

To answer your question number 3, I think that comes down to the chair of whatever the meeting is. In my case, I would ask everyone to be on the Zoom room and to use the Raise Hand feature in order to share the -- share the air space. And the reason basically being to ensure that there's both local and remote.

**[ Phone ringing ]**

Apologies on that. I had a call coming in from "scam likely," whoever that is.

But okay. So I think I would ensure that all voices were heard by using that tool, which is fair among the remote and the local people.

So back to you.

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SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you so much, Fred. And thank you for pointing directly to the questions that we have up on the screen because those are some of the most important, as we're hearing even in the trends of the comments that are being made.

The next person in the queue for me is Sam Demetriou.

SAMANTHA DEMETRIOU: Thanks, Sally. Hi, everyone. This is Sam Demetriou. I am the chair of the Registry Stakeholder Group, and I wanted to share some of the perspectives of our members here.

I'll start off by noting that the Registry Stakeholder Group has members from all over the world, and so we do recognize the reality that there are still travel restrictions in place, and that's going to make attending any in-person event challenging for a significant section of our members. And we'd also like to acknowledge the concerns that others have raised about potentially exacerbating inequalities in the eventual return to face-to-face meetings or a hybrid meeting with a face-to-face component. But all that said, the fact is that we just aren't getting as much work done when we're in an entirely remote setting.

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Registries, and I think I can also speak for registrars on this front as well, contracted parties as a whole, we engage in an awful a lot of work in the ICANN context amongst ourselves as contracted parties, with members of ICANN staff, and with the community. And oftentimes that goes beyond the sort of public-facing work streams that other attendees see from the public ICANN meeting agenda and schedules. This entails a lot of remote work and a lot of remote collaboration in between the face-to-face meetings, but we've often and historically relied on the opportunity to get together face to face to really advance that work, right? Whether it's to break down, you know, confusion or disagreements that have come up in between, reach consensus, or just get everyone in a room and work things through. Get things done.

So that's just not something that we've been able to really capture in the remote setting. That has nothing to do with the tools that ICANN org has made available. I want to take this moment to say that I think ICANN has done an amazing job in improving the tools that we've had available to us and done really such a good job, so much work to make the remote participation almost as good as it can be. But it's always going to have some limitations. There's always going to be something missing when you don't have that in-person and face-to-face element, which I think we've heard Maarten and Goran say at the top of the call.

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So I guess when it comes to the specific question of ICANN72, I think that maybe we need to take the pressure off of ourselves and not so much think of this as, like, our one chance to get hybrid meeting right or like the first opportunity to really be back face to face and have to have all the answers then. I think we should really look at it as an opportunity for us to be making the steps that we need to take to eventually get to the new post-pandemic normal, right?

So I would encourage a face-to-face component for ICANN72 so that we can start learning those lessons and start figuring out what it is that we need to do to make effective hybrid meetings. Because I think, as a lot of people have been saying in the chat and people have said earlier in the week, there's always been a hybrid component to ICANN Public Meetings. So figuring out the way to strike that balance where we are engaging the remote participants in an effective way but still allowing for the benefits of people being able to come together face to face is just really key.

So I think -- I think it's exciting to look at ICANN72 as an opportunity. And so I think that's how we should be approaching this problem.

Thanks very much.

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SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thanks very much, Sam.

I have a follow-up question for you, if I might. And it relates to the questions that we actually have on the screen.

I heard you when you said that we're not as productive in this a hundred percent virtual, but if we do go to that hybrid, do you -- do you believe that you'll be able to get more work done even if you may not have half of your -- your leads there or your chairs or your -- Do you think that will still be accomplishable?

SAMANTHA DEMETRIOU: I do, Sally. And I think that, in part, is due to just sort of the nature of the way we work. I think that it's a different proposition when you have, like, smaller groups tackling things. You can have people together in the same room who are engaging with their counterparts in a remote way as opposed to when everyone is just isolated, sitting in front of their computer screen, right?

I think -- you know, we try to do back channeling and outreach and keep in touch with each other in the remote way, but I think you still do gain efficiencies and you're able to do that well even when some are in person and some are remote.

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So I think the answer is yes. Obviously, it remains to be seen, and obviously it's like a -- something that all the chairs and all the other leaders are going to need to rise to. But I think we're ready.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Good. Thank you for that. Thank you for the extra question. We are going to close the queue because there's so many people in line. And we'll get through everyone.

So the next person I'll call on is lawyer Lori Schulman and then Ria is going to read out to us at least one of the online comments. So please go ahead, Lori.

LORI SCHULMAN: Hello. Thank you, Sally. Yeah, I have a few thoughts. I had asked in the chat of Nick, if we were to decide to postpone ICANN72 -- well, not postpone 72 but postpone the in-person part, that perhaps ICANN would save its expenses and any contractual obligations or penalties it has by contracting for perhaps 80; you know, a couple of years down the road. And that the City of Seattle might be very open to that because a lot of conference boards are aware of these issues and have been fairly flexible in allowing to change in-person meetings, provided you guarantee an in-person meeting a few years or a year down the road. That

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was one point I just wanted to make in terms of planning for expenses.

The second point I want to make is about the hybrid. I do believe, and I agree with what Sam said, that I think the longer we put this off, the harder it will become; that after meeting for a year and a half, I know in my own constituency, we had a GNSO vote on an issue that, because we were not all literally in a room together or mostly in a room together, it was extremely difficult if not impossible to build consensus on a GNSO vote. We ended up abstaining. So from a work perspective, that was not ideal.

And the other thought I had about the hybrid is I know that, you know, the hub -- the ICANN hubs are no longer, but I think it might be time to rethink regional engagement. You know, there are plans out now on how we do regional engagement, and perhaps we need to rethink that. And if we move forward with Seattle as an in person, perhaps we think about a spot in Geneva and a spot somewhere in Asia Pac and a spot somewhere in Latin America and take a truly regional approach and have regional bases that people can come together and can contribute.

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SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you. Thank you so much, Lori. Good things for us to consider and think about. Interesting suggestions. Thank you for that.

I'd like to ask that if you've already spoken, you take your hand down so we can keep track.

I'm going to go to Ria next with two comments, and then to Maureen Hilyard next.

So, Ria, please go ahead.

RIA OTANES: Thank you, Sally. We have a question from Raymond Mamattah: If we return to face to face, what will be the requirement for the COVID vaccine? Are we going to be forced to be vaccinated before coming to the meeting?

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: That's a good question. I think that there are a lot of -- there's a lot of research that we still have to do in this, and I don't know if Nick would like to respond or Goran, but I would say that I think it's -- we're not ready to determine that yet. But if anyone else would like to chime in from ICANN org.

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GORAN MARBY: Thank you for asking one of the toughest questions which we're trying to get at and which we're trying to figure out as well.

I mean, take this back and think about it from -- from a security perspective and for people. I said when -- when we did the Cancun, where we changed Cancun into a virtual meeting, that I love working for ICANN but I'm not willing to die for it.

And so there are -- you know, if we would do a hybrid meeting, if the Board would make that decision -- and I don't want to foretell what the Board is going to say and decide among this. I am a member of the Board. Are we going to have some really further discussions, and we have to think about that. There are so many pros and cons in this one. And -- But I think you agree that we all want, I think, to go back to meetings. We all want to have the possibility for a good remote participations.

The fact of the matter is we also have to take into account the safety measures to be able to do this, because we should not -- we should not -- we -- I mean, how do I formulate this in the best way? Life has to go forward before any ICANN session.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you, Goran.

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Ria, do you have another comment?

RIA OTANES: Yes. Comment from Rafik Dammak: If we move toward hybrid meeting, is there any risk that agenda/schedule of the meeting go back to the same number of sessions pre-COVID-19 which would put more burden on those attending remotely?

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: That's a good --

GORAN MARBY: Let me answer -- I answered that in the chat before, and it's actually up to the community. We have a meeting planning committee with the SOs and AC leaders who have an oversight of that. So I will ask that question for the SOs and ACs.

With that said, I think it's a very good question, because -- and it's been raised by other ones as well, that when we set the sessions for -- Sebastien said we will never go back to where we were before, and I agree with that. I think that we learned a lot and we can use that, but that also means that I think that the community has to look into how we do, how many sessions we do, when we do the sessions, so we actually are welcoming remote participations into as well.

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But the question is this is something that the SOs and AC leaders and the planning committee could have a look in to.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thanks very much, Goran.

Let's see. The next is Maureen Hilyard with ALAC.

MAUREEN HILYARD: Excuse my (indiscernible), Sally.

Thank you very much. We probably haven't been as organized as everyone else. We haven't had a chance in At-Large to discuss this as a team, the topic of future meetings, not in a formal way, anyway. But you may have noticed that At-Large is (indiscernible) in ICANN71, so that getting ready for this meeting and focusing on the one we were at was a priority of late. So we hope we can be excused.

But others have truly examined a lot of concerns, and I think it's important that we do. But at the same time, I think we should be looking at the potentials as well.

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I think that At-Large has proved that we are prepared to take a wait-and-see approach until the Board makes a decision for Seattle and other meetings and what expectations will be decided on. There are going to be some interesting challenges with hybrid, but I think that everyone's experience now of both types of meetings, I'm sure that we have an opportunity to carry out an interesting meeting experience for everyone once we start. You know, get back into the -- into the face-to-face sort of meetings that we've had.

And I share the view of a lot of people who have been active participants in the five virtual meetings that ICANN has held to date. You know, the -- for many of -- you know, there have been situations where there have been some challenges, but at the same time, I -- you know, just going by what was said earlier, you know, I think we need to look at these as opportunities.

And we've actually found in our sessions that one of the really important things about the virtual meetings has been an amazing ability for people to engage with each other. I mean, we've just had people coming out of the woodwork within the At-Large community. And I think that that's been a real positive. And we need to really use that when we -- if we -- when we change -- When we go back to face to face, we still need to retain that connection

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in a remote way, because there's always going to be people who can't make a meeting anyway.

So I think that what we -- you know, we can only predict that the future of face-to-face ICANN meetings is not going to be the same as it was in the past, and I hope it isn't.

Thank you.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you so much, Maureen. You're right, I think Goran said this, I know, and I think a few others have, too, that we can't go back to what we had. We've learned a lot that we can take forward. So that you can for that.

Ria, I'm going to come back to you because I recognize that we have many comments online, and I don't want to lose that. So if you are ready to read another one, that would be great.

RIA OTANES: I'm ready. Thank you.

We have a question from Sivasubramanian M: On what Goran Marby was saying, if travel rules make it complicated to travel to U.S. or Europe with some strange conditions where in travel out

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of the country is not really a problem, would ICANN roughly consider alternatives such as change of location of 72 to another central destination? Maybe someplace in North Africa somewhere.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you.

Go ahead, Goran.

GORAN MARBY: Do you want?

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Yes.

GORAN MARBY: Yeah, all good questions. You should -- We have done sort of mine maps about all the different alternatives. I don't think we checked in to move the Seattle meeting to North Africa but just to give you a sense of it, that won't -- travel to certain locations, even if you can travel back to your country, it might be so that you cannot -- you have to quarantine yourself for two weeks when you come -- when you reenter the country.

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So it -- the location right now -- all locations around the world, let's say, will -- are complicated because of travel restrictions. I'm especially going to take if -- depending how you look at, from a sort of it a north-tilt angle, which I hate to do, but it will be hard. I mean, any location, even within the African region, it would be hard to travel between countries as well. Which is one of the reasons why people ask us about hubs, and we said, yeah, hubs will also force people to travel to different countries with travel restrictions, and you might end up doing hubs in, you know -- you work in the middle of the night and lunch is served during the day.

Yeah, good questions, but really, really no answers.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Yeah. Hard questions to be sure.

Thank you, Goran.

We have two last people in the queue, and I think we will take these two exam then we will wrap it up. So Calvin Browne first, and then Philippe Fouquart, please.

So Calvin, to you next.

CALVIN BROWNE:

Yeah, Calvin Browne here from Johannesburg, South Africa. And, yeah, I'm really looking forward to getting back to face-to-face meetings with one of you as soon as possible. That being said, there's very little chance that I'm going to be able to make or anyone in my position is going to be able to make Seattle, if I look at the travel restrictions currently in place, if I look at flight things and tickets and prices and logistics. It's just a very large ask to actually go and do that.

So that's -- you know, that's going to be like that for quite a few people, I would imagine. And I'm looking at trails. And by the end of the year, things might look differently.

That being said, I also want to point out that discrimination is an interesting thing. It's very difficult to recognize until it's actually affected you. So what I'm saying there is if you want to find out about a wheelchair ramp for access to a building, speaking to able-bodied people is not the way to go and gauge the need for that. And that's something that we must just bear in mind when we go forth and do things for people who can't make these things anyway.

I think that's all I need to say.

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SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you very much, Calvin. I think it's an important perspective to keep in mind, so thank you for sharing that.

Philippe, if you would, please unmute your mic.

PHILIPPE FOUQUART: This is Philippe Fouquart. I'm the chair of the GNSO. I just wanted to share with you all the elements on which we debated on Monday at the GNSO. We have not put anything together yet when it comes to organization. We can echo all the comments that have been made until now. I just wanted to share with you the fact that I, too, want to come back to the face-to-face meeting as soon as possible.

And the last point was to be able to maintain some geographical balance among the participant, and also to emerge with the hubs or organize the hubs according to the situation at a regional level at the time of the meeting.

And I want to add one thought, which is a personal thought, a quick one. Something logical. With a decision mid-July and a meeting in November and following what we saw in the north -- northern hemisphere last year, mmm, I think when it comes to manage the risk, whichever the solution we have, we have to

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accommodate maybe a situation which get worse in the northern hemisphere. So we have to think about that. This is what Goran was just mentioning.

And I will end on that. Thank you very much.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you. Thank you so much, Philippe. Thank you to everyone who has contributed in the chat and has spoken. We are very much at the end of our session.

Before we close, I'd like to ask Maarten and Goran if they'd like to make any closing comments. So, Maarten, I'll go to you first, please.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Yes, so thank you. Thank you very much for your clearly engaged input here and your thoughts. And there are many of those that are crucial to consider, and no doubt it will not be a surprise that many of these are already on our list.

One thing that struck me is that there was an ask for measures like would we require vaccines. I think there's two things. One is how we secure the facilities. And as you know, that's always been a high point of attention. But the other thing is would the U.S. allow

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people in with vaccines? And of course we have no influence on immigration at this level.

I -- Also the equitable access and the divide. That part is something that is crucial in our considerations, and I heard several of you mention it, as well as to test and to -- to allow to do some testing.

The question is when should we start doing the testing? For sure, I would think that towards the future, it will get easier and easier to be comfortable in saying, okay, now the time is there. Whether the time is already there for October, we can't wait for September to decide. There is a lot of uncertainty about it. So please bear with us.

I can assure you that we listen, and we know, and we want to meet face to face as well, but we will take these considerations into account when we take our decision. And as always, we will make a very clear rationale for how we came to the decision, what is underlying that. It will be a responsible decision. It will have a clear ground for why we got to there.

And please continue to let the input come. We welcome it very much. So thank you all very much for your engaged input.

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SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you, Maarten.

Goran.

GORAN MARBY: Thank you. And thank you, everyone.

I'm actually going to quote a member of the Board, Nigel. He had said something in the chat. Sorry, Nigel. He said that this conversation really shows that, to some extent, even if we argue and stuff, we are part of a family. And I really like that notion.

And I maybe have a wish. After we did the Cancun meeting, there was a lot of discussions initially about that, but then again, we also, all sort of came together. And I just want to -- I have a voice that, and I have the greatest trust in the Board making -- whatever decision they're going to make, it's going to be something that I will trust, not only because I am the President and CEO, but also because these people come from the community. They are, in some shape or form, even (indiscernible) ones are placed on the Board coming from you. And I know that they're going to make this deliberation. And my wish is that roughly -- I mean, roughly, if you look at the survey, 50% wants to, 50% doesn't want to. This cannot -- I hope this will not be a polarizing decision for us

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because I know that the Board will make a decision based on what they -- what they think is the best for the whole community, which means that 50%, by mathematics, will not be pleased with the decision. But I hope we can come across -- work across that and help -- whatever the decision is, that we can continue to enhance the meeting and actually be this ICANN family that this meeting has shown.

Thank you very much.

SALLY NEWELL COHEN: Thank you, Goran.

Thank you. Thanks to all the presenters and the contributors to this conversation today. Clearly there's a lot of sides to this and a lot of edges to explore, if you will.

I want to thank the interpreters and the meetings team for the excellent interpretation and all of the setup for us. Thank you for that. Thank you all for your participation, your contributions. And I think with that, we are adjourn the session.

So thank you all and have a great rest of your day.

**[ END OF TRANSCRIPT ]**