
ICANN80 | PF – GAC Discussion: African Engagement in the GAC
Tuesday, June 11, 2024 – 15:30 to 17:00 KGL

JULIA CHARVOLEN: Hello and welcome to the ICANN80 GAC African Engagement Session on Tuesday, 11 June at 15:30 local time. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior. During this session, questions or comments submitted in the chat will be read aloud if put in the proper form.

Remember to state your name and the language you will speak in case you will be speaking a language other than English. Speak clearly and in a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation. You may access all available features for this session in the Zoom toolbar. With that, I will leave the floor over to Christine Arida. Over to you please.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Thank you, Julia. This is Christine Aida, GAC Vice Chair, and I would like to welcome you all to the session on GAC African engagement this evening. And this session is a continuation to the previous session on capacity development. And I would like to thank the working group on underserved regions for organizing both together also with Smart Africa.

So thank you very much for that, the whole purpose actually was to experiment in this meeting here in Africa with new modalities for capacity development. So we did the first session in a way that is presenting a topic of high interest, but we also would like to touch

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base more on what is happening within the African continent in terms of initiatives and activities so that we can have an overview of everything that is happening.

So our agenda for the day has two presentations mainly actually two and a half, let me put it this way. So we will first hear from Pierre Dandjinou here to my left from the Coalition for Digital Africa efforts. So we will have a presentation on the Coalition for Digital Africa.

And we will also listen to the findings of the African domain name Industry, 2023 African domain name industry report. And then we will turn to Smart Africa for a presentation on the Internet Governance Project. We already heard in the previous session from Thelma, a bit about this flagship project. I think we will delve into more details here in this session.

And then eventually we will be recapping on both sessions at the end of this session. I invite you actually to come up with questions and to have a quite interactive session as well. We will pose many times for questions but please raise your hand so that we can call your name. So with that, I will leave first the floor to Rodrigue Guiguemde, and please Rodrigue, the floor is yours.

RODRIGUE GUIGUEMDE: Yes, thank you very much. It's a great pleasure for us to be here, yes, really, because as you know, since few years ago, we are trying to work on internet governance topics to try to support our African stakeholders, especially in the government part, to know how we can

support them to build good ways on internet governance to address issues. This is really important for us.

So I think the capacity building session, we organized this more just now, it was really important and relevant in term of ccTLDs, also few was there. And now I think that we try to know which kind of approach we can define to involve more the African stakeholders in the process of internet governance, to know how we can organize more to address the issues and to be more comfortable during the discussion.

So I will be really, really happy to make the presentation about the Internet Governance Project, as Christine just said. And we are also involved in lot of process, especially the process of CDA, the Coalition for Digital Africa. That is really important for us because at the end, what we want is to gather all the stakeholders in the same way, to make Africa more relevant and to have Africa more strong about this kind of issues.

This is the few words I just want to share with you, and I think we have a good discussion. And I'll back after to make the presentation about Internet Governance Project on Smart Africa. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA:

Thank you very much, Rodrigue. And without further ado, I will pass the floor to Pierre Dandjinou. Pierre Dandjinou is VP for Stakeholder Engagement Africa, and he will be presenting on the Coalition for

Digital Africa, as well as on the 2023 Africa Domain Name Industry report. Pierre, the floor is yours.

PIERRE DANDJINOU:

Thank you very much, Christina, and good afternoon to everyone. I'm Pierre Dandjinou, staff member of ICANN, the VP in charge of a Global Stakeholder Engagement. And I specifically work on Africa. Of course, I'm going to kind of brief you on one of the initiatives that we launched one or two years ago.

But I would like to kind of present a kind of environment, where we are working, why did we come up with that initiative to just inform you that we do have what you call an Africa strategy, kind of ICANN strategy. And that strategy was developed by the community itself, and that really lined up a few things that we should be doing because the question that was put to them was what exactly Africa ICANN icon to be doing.

And we formed a group of African stakeholders who came up with very interesting sort of question, but also kind of solution they were having. And one of two or two pillars that came up in that report was African needs a better participation in ICANN because by the time they were writing this strategy, maybe 10 to 12 years ago, they felt that there was not much participation from Africa to the ICANN.

And the second thing that I was saying was backed up by the ministerial by meetings in Africa, was capacity development, how best to equip African so that they really contribute not only to ICANN work,

but also in the participation and to the digital transformation on the continent. So we have prepared a few sort of slides to go through this new initiative, but I want you to understand that this is not just what we've been doing in Africa. We've been really operating in a different aspect of it.

But you should also remember this is ICANN and ICANN has only its own no remit, which is about the DNS. And it was good to know this thing because we do have requests in terms of, okay, how are you investing on the infrastructure in Africa? How are you investing in the content development in Africa? This is not exactly what ICANN is here for.

JULIA CHARVOLEN: You want the next slide?

PIERRE DANDJINOU: Yeah. So next slide please, Julia. So we came up with this idea of this Coalition for Digital Africa. And this is the first time we are really as ICANN, trying to do a few things in Africa because we felt that there might be some sort of, I won't call it special treatment, but we think that we should move a little bit our contribution in Africa at a kind of another layer.

So why this coalition and why should we be talking about coalition? We felt that when it comes to digital transformation, we observed that there are many actors there that are trying to support with the

different project be there around the infrastructure, so many other things actually.

So we felt that if ICANN will be going that route, it's not going to be just because it's only ICANN, so why not to develop a consortium or a kind of coalition of like-minded institution. And one of the guiding principles that we have the institutional partners kind of signed is that they are here for the internet that is interoperable, internet that is kind of secure to everyone, and of course, that you believe in openness in all of this system, and then you want to facilitate accessibility in Africa.

The project itself, Coalition for Digital Africa has kind of areas of focus because we cannot do everything. Of course, coming from us, it was about having a robust DNS infrastructure in Africa. It's quite important to understand the centrality of the DNS system. It's also about what we are calling meaningful connectivity. And meaningful connectivity pillar is also about multilingualism on the internet. Then encourage sort of local content development in Africa, and if possible, using African language scripts. And then capacity development came high on the agenda as what people will be expecting from us and from our partners.

And it's just about having the skills that are necessary and the knowledge to be able to participate in the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance. So internet governance also came as kind of high on the agenda. So maybe quickly, what have we done? When we launched this initiative kind of a year ago at one of the IGF meeting, it was in Ethiopia. And exactly, what have we also achieved so far? We

wanted to go through that, and then I will be leaving room for some question if you have. The next slide, please.

The objectives are quite clear. It's about setting a group that's going to kind of pull resources so that we are able to contribute to the digital transformation in Africa. So the next slides are going to maybe give more details on what we have been doing, and we do have a few figures there, probably we need to update this.

But these are kind of highlights on what we've been doing. The coalition has been formed now with 14 partners that are institutions that kind of agree to the few principles that we end up there, and those partners we do have the names, I'm not going to go through that, but we should just notice that we do have universities, the Association of African Universities, for instance, is the one actually driving this universal acceptance and those international domain names with us.

So this is what they're doing with the research, unity in Africa is quite important to sell this because, for instance, one of the things we want to achieve is to have this universal acceptance, for instance in the curricular of these universities.

Right now, we have eight initiatives that are going on which really we think would be kind of contributing to digital transformation in Africa. What we are doing so far has been not impacting, but has been taking place in a few African countries, and we can cite 34 of them. And also, we believe that, and I'll be going through them, one of the projects in

terms of the pillar on the infrastructure is the MRS cluster that we call them internet-- sorry, ICANN manage root server system.

So we did something that is quite kind of premier, I will say in the African countries that we placed those root servers cluster. We started in Nairobi, the second one in Cairo, but the good thing in this is about a set of servers, copies of server that we put there, that that's exactly the following thing.

It helps you reduce latency in your accessibility to the internet. If you are able to kind of reduce a few milliseconds, for instance, you are actually working on the traffic, the way the traffic's going on. When we did have these sort of two cluster, we noticed a few things. For instance, we are now certain that 30% of the traffic that kind of go out of Africa and back to Africa are being handled in Africa.

And that's quite important to notice is, people normally don't cite DNS as part of the infrastructure, but this example really demonstrate that it's quite important to have them. And by the time you have these sort of copies of servers around Africa, definitely it's going to play a definite role in terms of facilitating accessibility, all of this thing.

This is one example of what we've been doing. The other one is the internet exchange points, which we are kind of establishing in partnership with ISCO. It's quite important also to understand what the is p should be doing. And one of them is about keeping kind of local, sort of data local actually. And this is happening also in an environment where ISOC has already kind of put a few of these ISPs in Africa.

ICANN decided to partner with them to speed up the process and have more and more ISPs in Africa is fundamental to have this sort of installations in Africa. This is about infrastructure. Next slide, please. There's something we call a meaningful connectivity. Okay, this is the list of the current partners, 14 of them.

I think we did have one or two that came in recently. And they're the Lawyers Association, for instance, quite important, AFNIC. No, I don't think so. AFNIC, yeah, the French registry. Definitely, they are to be one of our first single partners, and we actually will take the opportunity to fund them because we did have a workshop on marketing, for instance with regard to the domain names. And then they did conduct this with African ccTLDs

Key achievements so far. Of course, we talk about the MRS cluster. I would like also to put a stress on the publication of the 2023 Africa Domain Names Study, this is quite important. And we will be launching officially this report tomorrow actually at the Africa space. And this is about providing a report that really says exactly where is the status today of the DNS domain names, how are these things managed from Africa, consumed also from Africa, and what should we be doing in Africa? I'll be giving a few highlights on this report later on that really shows what is the reality today and what are recommendations to improve this in Africa.

The other thing that we do is quite important is the security aspect of the whole internet on the continent. It's about DNSSEC security extensions, we call it DNSSEC. And literally we do have this

deployment in countries such as Botswana. It's quite important because now we are talking about secure internet, and one way of securing your destination, I will say, is to have this DNSSEC applied there.

Right now on Africa, I don't know whether I'm certain of the figures, but of the 54 countries, close to 10, between 10 to 15 of them have secure their zone file. It's quite important to do that, and this is something that we are, we are happy. We do have a few partners on that. One of them is the I think Africa Telecommunication Union.

We also expecting a few of them, we know that UNICAF, for instance, is quite interested in this project. So that's the DNSSEC, and we do have, we conduct DNSSEC roadshows in different countries. We support sort of local workshops on this, and we make sure that people understand what it takes in terms of the technology, master the technology, and to be able to sign and validate the zone file. It is quite important, and these things are not kind of being done normally the way they should be in Africa.

Apart from this in terms of achievement, then maybe to switch to what you're calling the useful or kind of enabling this, what you do when you are connected actually. And we noticed that there are so many things that you should be doing, for instance about the universal acceptance things, and how do you make sure that your system, whatever system can communicate with our system or what sort of actions you need to be taking so that your system be at par with communication system information, this is quite important.

And we are happy to be having a joint project with the Association of African Universities. Quite important because with them, we are having a group of close to 400 institutions in the universities that are definitely conducting one or two things, which is about applying some of the technology to have tests, a few tests about the system, information system and to be sure that some of them are at par with the UA.

But if they're not, how do you make sure that they are? So we do have a workshop on that as well. One of the things we understood is that you have to also make sure that the lecturer, the professors at those universities really understand what it takes, and what this UA is all about.

So a good project here is going to be how we have this within their own curriculum at the universities. And they're quite happy. We are already working, having groups with them, and we hope that this is going to be happening. The other things about internet governance, capacity building, and then Smart Africa will certainly be talking about that because we are in partnership with them, and we just have the lawmakers as well here who might be facilitating this thing.

The other thing we'd like to insist on in terms of capacity development is the special project that was designed to actually accompany the African ccTLDs. It's about building capacity with the African ccTLDs in different domains. It can be technical, but also about the business side of the whole thing and the security side of it. Again, a few sort of programs have been the design whereby we'll be working with them

here and there. And so one of them happened here side by side with ICANN, and we are happy that this is happening. So this is in a nutshell what we've been doing, and we feel that we should be doing more on that. If I could pause here.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Pierre, if I can pause you here and see if there are any questions and reactions from the floor or from the remote participants noting that in the chat, there is a link on where you can read more about the Coalition for Digital Africa. So I'm wondering, are there any questions?

JULIA CHARVOLEN: Christine, we have a hand raised in Zoom. Mauritania.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Mauritania, yes, please, the floor is yours.

MOHAMED EL MOCTAR: Mohamed El Moctar Mohamedine, the GAC rep of Mauritania. Thank you very much for the very useful presentation, and I had actually the opportunity to preview it yesterday during the Smart Africa meeting as well. The question I have is it captured my interest and I realize that you have only 34 country members as of now, and it is a Coalition for Africa, and I think we are 54. So what is the process to be joining if that is a possibility or if you can explain a bit more the process of joining and participating in this action. Thank you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU:

Thank you very much for that question. And of course, you know that we've been receiving that sort of question, why only 34 countries and why not the 54 of them? Thirty-four because that's where some of this project I spoke about is happening and because of so many sort of criteria actually.

For the ccTLDs, for and when we wanted to build capacity, what we start to hear is just a pilot project because obviously, you cannot tackle all the 54 countries. It's a pilot, and at the end of this pilot, of course, definitely we are going to extend this and have more and more countries involved in that, so that's the only issue here, so we didn't select.

We've said that, okay, we might be going with 10 of them, and of course, the criteria is that those countries really want to be going on with that, that the managers are happy to be contributing especially when we are having our head of workshops, with them, that should be the one driving the whole process.

We are bringing maybe consultant, but we are also bringing the tools that are necessary, but this should be happening in a kind of action plan they do have on national level, but we don't impose on those things. So it was just a pilot that we start with, and definitely, we are going to move into different other countries. I know Mauritania is already expressed some interest, we know it, but it will be happening. But this is for the ccTLD.

Different things are happening in different places. For instance, signing your zone file, we spoke about the DNSSEC roadshows for instance, right now, maybe only four to five countries are targeted, but we are talking about the whole Africa doing these things. So definitely we are going also to move to another layer where we are having more and more countries on that. And also with our partners, because if partners are ready to go in whatever project, then that give us more kind of possibility to have more and more countries involved in that. So yeah, thank you for that.

CHRISTINE ARIDA:

Thank you. I have another question in the chat, and the question is from Vanuatu, and it reads, "Can you explain more about the internet governance capacity development for governments and lawmakers? How do you deliver this and what are the challenges?"

PIERRE DANDJINO:

Thank you. That's a good question. And this reminds me that this is one of the first time that we had parliamentarians to the ICANN meeting. And this happened because under the CDA, we did have kind of partnership, I will say, with this network of parliamentarians that approached us and say, well, we would like to know more about this internet governance, what it takes, what is it exactly?

And we thought that, of course, coming to ICANN would be one of the way you do it. But before coming to this ICANN80, what we did here three or four days ago was to have them in the kind of workshop, and

we managed to explain what it takes and what is it exactly that we are talking when you say internet governance.

And we did have quite interesting question from them. And the question from them was, okay, what do you mean domain names, for instance? Who managed this domain names from our country? A few of them end up understanding that, oh, but these domain names are not managed from our country.

Someone is sitting somewhere managing our domain names. So they are seeing issues, but one of the takeaway that we saw that is that they needed to be informed because they are also lawmakers. And for countries to be able to take the appropriate decision on internet governance aspects, they need to understand what it takes.

When you mean IPv4, IPv6, a decision maker may not really understand this. When they are conditioned for using those internet related resources, maybe you just need also to work on your legislation, have laws in place.

You are talking about this personal data, you know, and all of this and what comes in terms of legislation, what you have to do, what you don't do, what's your strategy in your country.

All of these are quite important, but if you don't build capacity, especially for lawmakers, especially for decision makers, I think you are not really reaching anywhere. So we were so happy to have brought those kind of parliamentarians here to be talking about. And then some of them are still here now at the GAC meeting. Some of

them find out that, well, there is something that's called GAC, and then they would like to be coming regularly to those meeting, share ideas, but also pick whatever best examples are successful in the field of managing those resources.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Thank you, Pierre. Are there any other questions? Okay. I see none. I think we can continue. Oh, sorry. There is a question. Please introduce yourself.

IRENE KAGGWA: Thank you very much. This is Irene Kaggwa from Uganda. I want to thank the centers, especially when I see my long-term brother who's been fighting this cause in respect of Africa. Mine is more of a comment. I applaud you that you bring together different organizations that are interested on this matter.

From a national point of view, one of the challenges that we have observed is we are failing to harness the support that comes in because of how it's channeled. I come here, I find a parliamentarian, I didn't even know you are contacting so and so, you are working with academia, I don't know, because as nationals, we observe the need to have a coordination.

Yes, we're respecting, all of us want to work a certain cause and collecting the available resources, but if we don't know who's working on what and don't have that coordination or that information available to us, then we won't end up seeing the benefits of this

because you find you're hearing support has been going to a certain country and most likely the benefits are not yet being seen because they are not fitting in with the national digital transformation plan. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Thank you for your comments.

PIERRE DANDJINOU: Yeah, thanks very much for that comment. But this also boils down to, of course, communication across the line, but also what we are calling multi-stakeholder environment in the different countries. And also, it's important that technical people are communicating also with decision makers and that all that are concerned in country level are able to have, I don't know, a channel where they really talk to each other.

We understand that that's a big issue and we are happy that you are actually raising that issue, but we think that it has to be also in different countries to be able to be talking on the governance issues as kind of team, as a group of people. So yeah, the market over the model is quite important for that matter.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Thank you. And I see in the chat Switzerland has posted some additional information about other activities related to capacity

building from [00:32:38 - inaudible] Foundation. Thank you, Switzerland. And I have a question from Papua New Guinea.

RUSSELL WORUBA:

Thank you very much, Chair. And thank you for the update on the collision of Africa. It's very encouraging and it sets good precedents for other regional areas like us in the Pacific. As my colleague from Vanuatu has mentioned, they are the regional groupings here. And we have started our journey by trying to get our ICT ministers to come together.

This is more a comment, then I'll come to a question. And we want to put that to our Pacific Leaders Forum, which will be meeting in Tonga in towards the end of the year. And we have to pass a declaration by which we coordinate how support comes in from multilateral or other groups like the UN or specific donors into the region. I'd be interested to know how you came up with these initiatives. Did you have something like an internet development policy or a plan that sort of encompasses everyone, or you went straight to each of the economies and each of the regions or sub regions within Africa, and that sort of prompted how you initiated the thinking behind those initiatives. Thank you.

PIERRE DANDJINO:

Thank you very much. You recognize that from starting point, I was saying that this coalition is not coming in a kind of vacuum. We do have what we call the Africa strategy that's already there. And that

strategy has been developed by Africans themselves. And the question for them was, okay, what were you expecting from ICANN actually to deliver?

And they came up with the pillars, where we should be engaging with them, that's exactly what it is. But then this initiative eventually also came up because we also felt the needs for having different partners working together because we thought we might not be going on this just as ICANN because that's the first time we are actually launching this sort of initiative. We thought that it has to be through a kind of partnership with others.

So that's one of the first criteria. Do this, but with other partners. We are just putting kind of starting ideas there. So we kind of build a kind of not working group per se, but to the concept paper we develop and then we share with different, towards different I would say participant who then of course were able to understand what it takes eventually, come back on us on things that we didn't put in that, you know, strategy.

That's the way it came about. So it was not from a vacuum, but it was something that was actually continuing what we already start with Africa, which is the Africa strategy which led up exactly what African are looking forward to and what they are expecting ICANN to deliver in Africa.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Okay. We have one more question and a comment in the chat, which I'll read out, and then I think we should be moving to the next part, for the sake of time. So the question comes from Eswatini, and it reads, "This is good work you are doing for our continent. Have you tried working with RECs in order to have access to all regions?" And the comment is, I'd like to point, it's from Paul [00:36:31 - inaudible]. And he says, "I'd like to point out that a major point of capacity building is the work on DNS observatory." If you'd like to respond and comment on those two points. Thank you.

PIERRE DANDJINOU: Oh, definitely. So this is someone who understand what we are doing. The observatory in fact is one of the deliverables to this report we are launching tomorrow. It is there, it's about having not just a repository, but a platform where whoever would like to have any information data on DNS in Africa could get it and is updated. There again, it's a project we want to be kind of developing with partners. So definitely, we want to be talking with different partners once we launch this report because the report also has a sizable part on the observatory. You know, what are the option there to have this observatory setup in Africa?

Who could be the partners, what kind of technology we are going to use. So we haven't really decided yet on when we are having this. We know there are, I won't say parallel, but there are already sort of over initiative that came up through FDL and others, having kind of what you might call pilot, this observatory. At some point, we might need to

put all of this together and have something comprehensive for the DNSSEC environment in Africa.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: And on the working with the regional commission RECs, I think it's meant Regional Economic Commissions, if I'm correct.

PIERRE DANDJINOU: Yeah. Okay. Sorry. We did have a request from countries, specific countries who would like to be part of this. As we said, we have not really made any decision because do we need to have all 54 African countries part of this? We did receive a kind of interest from regulators, for instance, same thing with them.

And also economic sort of, you see UNICA is there, of course, but this is international. Yesterday, no, I mean this morning, we had a meeting of partners and we have participation from one, and we'll call him observer because he turned up in the group because he read and said, wow, this is important for us in our region.

So one of his observations was that, okay, we should be accepting regional or economic region as part of this group. So this is something that the coalition is going to decide on. Coalition itself is going to have a few sort of governance structures. We don't have time to get into that, but the decision is going to be from the coalition itself steering committee.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: So can we hold the few questions that are coming to the end of the session? Maybe we move on and we can come back to that if possible. Thank you for your understanding. So can we maybe continue with the presentation on the study. The African study. Yes, please.

PIERRE DANDJINOU: No, thank you. That will be quick because since we are inviting you all to our Africa space tomorrow, you have more sort of information on this finding of this study, which is about what we call it, unlocking digital potential in Africa. And this provides a few insights from the 2023 Africa Domain Name Industry Study.

ICANN committed a study close to six years ago on the domain environment in Africa, and that was meant for, of course, first to properly inform whoever is interested in that issue in Africa. And secondly, provide room for more, I would say, advocacy on using the domain names in Africa. And it was interesting because then the community asked for a kind of update of that report, and that was in response to that request from the community that we launched this sort of study, which is an update I will say, of what was done.

We committed for consultant that came up with what we are going to launch tomorrow for the study. But quickly there are a few things in that, report was quite interesting for the statistics that it came about. Of course, the issues are still there, the issue about the infrastructure.

When you want to assess the internet in Africa, there are a few pillars that are there, and definitely they're still there, they will be there. I

mean, things are changing anyway, but they're still there. So the infrastructure as accessibility is important. Of course, there's also this digital divide, challenges in Africa whereby you do have, countries where you have cities that are well connected, maybe 80% for instance, of the resident population versus the underserved regions.

Eventually, areas where you hardly have maybe 2% of them having any accessibility to the internet. In terms of domain name registration, because that's also exactly what our study was supposed to address, a few things that we noticed was in Africa, as of November, 2023, there are over 4.33 million domains registered under African country code top level domains.

What does it mean exactly? The cruel fact is that out of 1.2 or 4 billion population in Africa, only 4.3 million domains are registered, which means that there's still some room for actions here. And to be also frank, actually half of this number of registered domains is coming from just one country. And I'll say three quarter of this coming from kind of four countries. I don't need to cite countries here, but you have plenty of time tomorrow to come back on those things. The next slide is on. Yeah, I'm just trying to speed up things. Sorry for that.

So the project, sort of the report also came out with a few things such as, a significant concentration of web content and domain hosting remains within only a few countries, meaning most of the countries are having some of those things, especially the web content residing outside of Africa. So there is certainly a way where you can change

this sort of situation. So we have a need for more localized internet services in Africa.

Next slide, please. Now, maybe kind of what to do. One of the things that they are recommending here, because I thought that we might be moving fast, and tomorrow we are having more time for this thing. For instance, the policy and the regulatory enhancement, this is important again, it's a big pillar on those things. How do you secure whatever you are doing if your legislation is not that par with that. So we need to enhance, this policy in a regulatory environment.

Of course, we are talking about having your script, your languages. That's going to facilitate your going on the internet, it's quite interesting. But also, you need some sort of local content that you are developing. So one of the recommendation here is also to promote local content in African languages. So again, it's important sort of recommendation. So of course, question could be of the 4 to 5,000, languages in Africa which of them are you going to prioritize?

But these are kind of policy question that you say which is not ours. Now apart from this recommendation, we believe that most of the services need to be kind of expanded. Today, if you consider the DNS operation, most of the countries, they don't have registrar, meaning those who are able to really, sorry, expand the services out of the cities, things that we really know, and also good for the business in the country so that we don't have just the registry.

This is the one sort of providing those services, but you should expand the services and have more and more actors giving out those services.

It's quite important recommendation for them. But like I said, we are going to have ample explanation discussion on the findings. And the consultant also will be around tomorrow at the Africa space, all of these things are going to be discussed. I'm sorry, I have shortened your time.

CHRISTINE ARIDA:

No, perfect. Thank you very much. I actually have two questions that are in the chat. So I have a question from Switzerland, and it's about the Coalition for Digital Africa. And the question reads, "Is the coalition working together with the African Union and or with Francophone? And then I have -- and I would read both and you can respond -- and then I have a question from [00:46:52 – Mary Odoma] saying, "Can the capacity development on internet governance for parliamentarians be delivered through the regional and sub-regional IGFs? The West African Internet Governance Forum has planned an MP track session. How can we access the resource?"

PIERRE DANDJINO:

No, thank you very much. Definitely, we've been talking with Africa Union, and I have to admit that Africa Union and other regional institutions are where our first sort will be talking with definitely. So, and we are still moving on that because we understand that Africa Union is paramount to most of what's happening in terms of digital economy.

And by the way, even the vision of under the CDA part of the thing also came from the Africa Union's sort of strategy for digital economy. So definitely, yes, as far as we are concerned, we are quite open. And we already met with Africa Union twice to introduce them with this idea, and we now need to find the right protocols to be having them working with them.

In terms of Francophone, we haven't really-- all of this is happening also by interest. The institutions should be interested in working with the coalition, within the coalition. So

whenever the requests come, of course, the team and the coalition team will be working on that and then deciding whether to have them or not. But though all of this comes with a few sort of criteria that we need to respect, so that's the case.

In terms of capacity development for the parliamentarians and the idea of having those training done within the context of the IGFs, I think that's a good option that we could consider. But like I said, there is so many things to be done in terms of promoting digital sort of transformation in Africa.

We started with the network of the parliamentarian who approached us, saying we are interested. That's why we crafted this sort of different workshop with them. But definitely we are open to be talking with IGF and whoever is interested actually to do those things. We've been approached by so many different organizations. I'm not going to site them here, but like I said, it's kind of how do we pull resources to

have better effect in terms of digital transformation in Africa. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA:

Thank you very much, Pierre, for a very interesting presentation and discussion. I'm sure there's a lot of interest to discuss more in the room. And just to note that there is the link to the Africa space session that Pierre just mentioned in the chat. I think we can move to the second part of the session, and I believe Rodrigue is going to speak in French. Rodrigue, as you wish, I give you the floor.

RODRIGUE GUIGUEMDE:

Thank you very much for this opportunity to talk about the Internet Governance Project in Smart Africa. As you see, we switch in French because we need to have other language, I think, directly, and yes. Thanks. First and foremost, I'd like to address what Smart Africa is, but very briefly, because we are running out of time.

Smart Africa is a vision. It is a vision for a transformation of Africa, transforming it into a single market in order to bring about digital transformation. This is our vision at Smart Africa. To that end, we have elaborated a number of projects. Smart Africa was created in the wake of a vision expressed by a number of heads of states. These heads of states laid down a number of principles in a manifesto, and they wanted to put ICTs at the heart of our actions, and they wanted to foster openness, accessibility, thanks to the development of ICTs,

notably in the private sector. They also wanted to foster sustainable development.

So this was endorsed by the African Union in January, 2014 during the heads of state meeting. We have 39 members, we now have 40 members of this alliance. The last member is the Central African Republic. We're fortunate to have partners of the private sector, but also partners that are international institutions. So we're open enough to pool around us a number of stakeholders now.

I'll now like to address challenges that underpin the creation of this initiative for internet governance. What was our main finding? In 2021, Burkina Faso submitted an initiative to Smart Africa, an initiative that pertained to internet governance. Indeed, there are a number of challenges that we have to rise up to. We have addressed this many times. Often there's a lack of commitment on behalf of governments, and we have also issues with the internet being turned off in countries.

And this is an issue that must be better circulated, and we are looking at this with AFNIC on the continent. So we also need to work on strengthening these instances, and we need to better represent African countries in these forays. Therefore, we must implement this mechanism, and it will in any case, complement the other mechanisms in place. I would like to support what Pierre Dandjinou was saying about the coalition, Africa needs it.

So it's really about rising up to the challenges in terms of internet governance. We need to come up with solutions, because when you identify an issue, you also have to come up with a solution. This is

crucial to our approach. Furthermore, the vision has to be holistic. We have outlined a number of targets for this project. They are fivefold. First objective, representing Africans in the decision-making fora or the discussion fora.

Yesterday, we addressed the launch of this working group pertaining to this flagship project. So this is one of the main issues because then we also have regulation and policies. It's important to enhance the implementation of policies. Then there's collaboration. I was listening closely to Pierre Dandjinou yesterday when he took the floor during the working group meeting, and I believe that this synergy, this collaboration is really encouraging this approach. It's gonna foster the development of critical infrastructures that are relevant for the internet.

Then there's sovereignty. Sovereignty is crucial, we need to advocate for better management of critical infrastructure. Our final target is crucial, it's capacity building. A lot of work is being done with the coalition, and I believe that this initiative of building the capacity of parliamentarians is crucial and Smart Africa supports this. There are other initiatives that we will bring about with the support of ICANN in order to really build the capacity of governmental stakeholders and parliamentarians.

These are our targets. First, we want to map the stakeholders. This mapping is done also thanks to ICANN. Who are these stakeholders? They are countries, governments, they are our targets for the awareness raising campaigns.

Then we also have local organizations. Obviously, we're not gonna look directly at coordinating measures at the local level. We believe we have to leverage governments in order to reach that level. Furthermore, we want to work with regional organizations. Pierre Dandjinou addressed the importance of regional economic communities. These communities are instrumental. They can really bolster the impact of our initiatives. Indeed, what we do can support this, but I believe that pooling our efforts with these regional economic communities would be very fruitful and we will really follow that approach in order to maximize the impact on Africa.

So once again, we are going to go over the blueprint now. In terms of approach objectives, stakeholders, and pooling resources, for everything I said, it is important to be able to have a clear idea of what we wish to do with it all. And so how do we intend to get to the objectives that we have in mind. In Smart Africa, we have to that end worked on defining what we have come to call flagship documents. These are the documents where we provide the continental vision we have set out for ourselves, and that is what we have come to call our blueprint.

The idea is for this blueprint to work as a set of guidelines and to work on elaborating or developing recommendations that stem out of those guidelines, and that each country can adapt to their local reality in order to attain the objectives that we have set out. So that is what we have been doing while working together. So we work as a group to put together the blueprint and then we do everything necessary so that it

can be adopted by the local countries and the different sovereign countries.

I said there are 40 members, 40 different countries that are involved today, and we hope to reach all 54 in time. In order to implement this blueprint, we have proposed an action plan. Next slide, please.

And a number of actions have already been undertaken since 2020, and I'm not going to go over them in the interest of time, but next slide. The implementation plan that we suggest time and again reaches out to the blueprint to get the information necessary. So as you see on the slide first, we had a first stage during which we developed a number of documents back in May, and then we swiftly moved on to establishing and launching the working group.

We met together with all the stakeholders, I have already presented this month. There were about 40 different structures that were represented there, and the discussions were highly fruitful. It is our intent to work with certain partners at ICANN to be able to define with the contents of the flagship document should be so that the entire continent can have the necessary guidance to adapt this material.

We hope there will be a first draft of the blueprint available by the end of the year. It will have to go through a procedure of development and validation first, but it will then be adapted to the different regional realities as I was saying before. I didn't explain this, but we do have a procedure of validation in Smart Africa. There are consultation procedures, there are a number of ICT ministries that are involved, and

ultimately there is a board where the different heads of state of the member states will validate the blueprint.

This is the approach we have chosen because it allows us to have a blueprint that is validated by every sovereign nation so that it can be swiftly adapted to the local reality. So that is what I wanted to share with you regarding our approach to the flagship project on internet covenants. We have already defined what the dynamics will be, and we are most optimistic. We hope that by partnering with the coalition, Africa will raise to the challenge. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA:

Thank you, Rodrigue. There are any questions? Okay. If there are no questions, then I have a question if possible. Yeah, so you, you, you talked about having more representation from Africa in cyber diplomacy, in internet governance prosthesis, if I understand correctly, to address that as a challenge. So I wanted to see once the blueprint is actually there and we moved to an implementation phase, are we going to implement just in terms of countries and encouraging them and looking at policies or you also look at the global processes and try to have an impact there?

RODRIGUE GUIGUEMDE:

Yes. Thank you very much, Christine. Yes, what I'm saying. Really after the validation of this blueprint, the countries is our main stakeholders in the first step for the pilot phase to try to involve them, to try to build a national strategy for them. But as you know, we can

work with the countries without the involvement of the international organization. But everything is holistic, it's very important to work with each stakeholder to try to gather them and to have federate actions.

So we want, after the validation of the blueprint, to go through the interest countries to ask them, because in our process, we are asking them sometime after the blueprint validation to send their interest. And after the sending of their interest, we are going with some partners to try to build their national strategy and to try to know if we can support including the partners, the action, the concrete action in these countries. So this is I think the real important point for us after the validation of the blueprint. I think that your question is very relevant and this is the answer I want to share. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA:

Thank you very much. And I do not see any questions nor on the chat, nor from-- there is a question. Yes, please. Can you introduce yourself?

IBRAHIM PATRICK CONGO:

Hi, my name is Ibrahim Patrick Congo from Burkina Faso. It isn't so much a question, it's rather an appreciation of the speakers. Particularly, I wanted to thank Mr. Guiguemde for the interesting project he just presented. Burkina Faso is represented within Smart Africa, and I would like to tell you how honored we feel to be a part of it. Mr. Dandjinou also mentioned another principle related to the

approach of internet governance. Someone in Uganda said there was no communication between the different sectors, and I wanted to share with you an experience we had in Burkina Faso regarding domain names.

We worked with BDI, an association that tried to put together a framework document enabling us to be aware of the existence of the different stakeholders that need to be involved in the participative approach. I think that is one of the tasks our governments need to undertake so that all stakeholders can be involved whenever the beneficiaries are within the population or outside of the government at any rate, they all need to be involved.

All stakeholders need to participate and be engaged. So communication is most important, but I think creating a collaborative framework for engagement is also very important. That's what I wanted to say. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA:

I think I saw another hand in front. Okay, so I believe we can now take Djibril, who was kind enough to take notes from both sessions, the capacity development track or maybe just from this one. I think you would like to read to us the points that you took.

DJIBRIL DEME:

Good afternoon, everyone. I will try to summarize some recommendation from the room. So in total, I have currently seven recommendation. The first one is mostly improved GAC member

understanding on the process for developing the regulatory framework and internet policy and also effective combat for civil treat.

The second one is convicting discussion around the creation and operationalization of a coordination forum for GAC member and the issue of interest to the continent. The third recommendation is share with interest African country, the criteria for joining the coalition for Digital Africa effort.

The fourth recommendation is encourage the development of a local internet exchange point and data center to reduce the internet cost and improve the local internet quality, driving the demand for local domain registration.

The fifth recommendation is expand the cooperation with political decision maker to implement effective commercial and marketing strategy supported by strict regulation to increase the growth of the DNS industry and use of internet.

The sixth one is advocate policy that reduces the cost of internet access and support digital inclusion to accompany the growth of DNS industry.

The last recommendation is the one raised by Rodrigue is work closely with the African regulator and regional economic community, and implementing those various recommendation who will be identified during the collaboration. This is the recommendation I took note, I hope I cover all. If maybe I miss something, please, you can raise your hand and add it. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA:

Thank you very much, Djibril. This was very useful, and thank you for your help. In the time left, we have a bit more than quarter of an hour. I will invite back Karel to the stage. Yes, thank you, Karel. Here you are. Because we have a couple of prepared questions to have your input on both capacity development sessions.

But I would like first to thank Pierre for his presentation. And I know you're very busy, don't want to hold you more if you can allow me to welcome Pierre and thank him. Thank you very much. So the point of the remaining time is actually to go through your takeaways from both capacity development session with the purpose of trying to inject new ways of addressing capacity development in future meetings. So with that, I will pass the microphone back to Karel.

KAREL DOUGLAS:

Thank you, Christine. Karel Douglas, Trinidad and Tobago Underserved Regions Working Group co-chair. But thank you, Pierre and Rodrigue, for a fantastic presentation, and of course, those who have presented before, earlier in the previous session. We do have some questions to stimulate some of the issues that we thought we would throw up.

And these questions are for you, and we know how important these issues are to you, and we've seen this time and time again. The earlier session, we found that a lot of persons were asking questions, and

even after the session there was a lot of discussion on the stage here, and we know that there are issues that have to be resolved.

Hopefully, at the next session we will have even more time to flesh out some of these issues. But whilst we are doing that, we want to ask you and put questions to you that you may want to opine on or contribute responses to. So some of the questions are on the board, and I don't think we have to take them in a sequential order unless I'm directed to do so. But I want to throw to the community, what are the issues here? So for your country, what are the key takeaways from today's presentations?

Not all at once, of course, but feel free to, and if that doesn't stimulate you, maybe what are these, I guess, goals and issues important for your region? And we did see earlier the ccTLD issue, of course, capacity engagement and capacity building are critical issues. We just had seven takeaways, and early we found some of the discussions concerning the policies that IANA had for the redelegation or revocation of ccTLDs. All right, so I do have Tracy Hackshaw. And so let's go to Tracy Hackshaw. And I do also recognize Nigel Cassimire from the CTU. Tracy.

TRACY HACKSHAW:

All right, thanks, Karel. I'll start the ball rolling, and hopefully I'll create the momentum for more and more responses. So for the second question, I think the ccTLD issue is important for underserved regions and African particular in terms of developing the DNS industry. As we heard in the applicant support program discussions earlier,

there is a significant lack of diversity within the DNS industry, and the ccTLD sector actually can play a role in creating that additional diversity.

What happens with ccTLDs? You have a top-level domain, but there's a registry behind that and some registries are run locally by the ccTLD, not all, but some. And that is an opportunity for those countries which have ccTLDs that are run locally to use the opportunity to look at maybe the applicant support program and apply for new gTLD coming up, or to offer services to other businesses in the region who may want to apply for the program.

Because once you have the software to run a registry, that can be, I mightn't say easily, but it can be extended and scaled to work with gTLDs and others. And that has happened in other countries, such as in the UK and Australia, where they provide services to other gTLDs, even though they are ccTLD in those countries. So I think the whole is your ccTLDs and growing them and developing the industry and having sort of a multi stakeholder view of the ccTLD industry is important and I'd want to hear what others think. I'll just kind of stoke the fire there on that. Thank you very much.

KAREL DOUGLAS:

Thank you, Tracy from UPU. Okay, so thank you. Any responses from the community? If not, Nigel-- Okay, sorry.

PAUL HILL:

Yeah, I'm very much calling into the community, I ended up sitting with a Ghanaian group. I think one of the real challenges that has come up, and it might apply to one specific ccTLD, but I think there is a broader principle at that stake is that policies have been very cleverly and I think correctly developed that do not allow the IANA to simply redelegate, and so on. And there is certainly room to try to rely on cooperation and so on.

But the particular problem comes in when there is an unreasonable holdout in a transfer process. So, it's all good and well, and I think the policy by and large is correct in wanting to force the parties to collaborate, cooperate, there's a whole bunch of things that we need to be doing.

But when one party, by virtue of having historically controlled the country code mechanisms being the country code manager is able to hold out, that presents a problem. And I think it's fair to say that while the policy is generally correct, the situation in some instances will, if not addressed, if there aren't other levers used, it could bring in to distribute the IANA function as far as I'm concerned.

Like I said, Ghana might be a reasonably unique situation, but it's not the only time where you could end up in a situation where a holdout is perceived by the local community to being empowered by ICANN and parts of the community to behave badly and against the interests of that community and that sovereign state, and that's not a healthy situation.

So I certainly think there is a need, not so much with the IANA function, I think the PTI needs to avoid getting into the fray, but certainly the ccNSO, certainly various other supporting organizations need to find a way to bring levers to bear to prevent an irrational holdout from causing major problems in the reputation of things. Thank you.

KAREL DOUGLAS: Okay, thank you. Could you identify yourself, please?

PAUL HILL: I thought I did at the beginning, sorry. It's Paul Hill and I'm here with my consulting company. Thanks.

KAREL DOUGLAS: Thank you so much, Paul, and those are some of the critical issues that was mentioned earlier as well. So Nigel Cassimire from the CTU. Thank you.

NIGEL CASSIMIRE: Thank you very much, Karel. Mine is on a different topic. Focusing on the second part of our session this afternoon, the key takeaway for me is I was struck by the number of parallels I saw between what is happening and actions taking place in Africa as compared to the Caribbean. There is a lot, the same sort of initiative, the same sort of timeframes in which the initiatives were started and the challenges along the way and so on. One could draw parallels almost exactly with happenings in the Caribbean.

But the good thing I would say is that we've been forging, over the last couple years, more core collaboration and corporate between the Caribbean and Africa, building up relationship between the CTU and the ATU in particular. And I think that would give us the opportunity to maybe work together and share experiences and maybe learn faster how to expedite the progress that we want to see going forward. Thank you.

KAREL DOUGLAS:

Thank you, Nigel. And you're right, and those are the critical issues and their similarities. And somebody said before from the historical perspective, at the time, maybe it was envisioned that these would be the issues and now these issues are arising, what are the mechanisms to resolve those issues? But I do see Rapid and anybody else? Rapid, you want to identify yourself? Thank you.

RAPID SUN:

Sorry, Douglas. Rapid Sun from Cambodia. So I see the report on the Africa Domain Name Industry is very good. And my question, is there any possible study about the domain name industry in Asia or maybe specifically for Cambodia? And then if we would like to request for that study, what is the process? Thank you.

KAREL DOUGLAS:

Okay. Thank you, Rapid Sun. Any response of anything in Asia?

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Actually, I was going to join the same thing. I think what I'm personally identified through the presentations and also yesterday in the discussion with Smart Africa, is that the problems that we face in Africa, I think are also in many other countries, developing countries or countries of the global south.

And I think to respond to question number four, I think we need more of those studies that are in depth in the markets that need to be developed. I think more resources should be put into that. And so I join you that this is something that is pretty much needed. I'm sure we will identify synergies when we do that, and we can work in peer partnerships like Nigel was suggesting partnerships or cooperations between Africa and Caribbean region. I think similar situations and synergies can be found in either of the topics that we discussed today, be it internet governance, be it domain names, IP addresses, and so forth. Thank you.

KAREL DOUGLAS: Thank you. And could you identify yourself, and proceed here?

MOHAMED EL MOCTAR: Sorry. For the record, sorry, Mohamed El Moctar Mohamedine, GAC representative of Mauritania. I feel that the responsibility to answer your questions given the effort that you have gone through to share all of these with us. And as I stated earlier, I'm really glad that I have participated here on these two, and some of them are so important to me that I saw them twice, one yesterday with Smart Africa and one

today the same here. So they are really hitting home, and these are the main issues that we have identified at the national level to pursue here at ICANN with ICANN and with other partners.

Not only the internet governance with Smart Africa, which is also part of the eight points that the Coalition for Africa has raised, but literally the eight issues are of importance to Mauritania. So the challenges, I guess and the way forward is how to implement them, how to execute them, how to find a framework for that to happen. I know that some of that is already going on within the ICANN, the DNS security, for example, and some other capability development. But we really need to find an execution framework for it to be effective and not to be just talk and presentation. Thank you.

KAREL DOUGLAS:

Any responses from the panel?

PIERRE DANDJINO:

If I may, I think there was a keyword there, which is sharing the experiences. What we are doing in Africa as part of the CDA is also collecting a few lessons to be learned when you are establishing such a thing. So in fact, within ICANN, the plan is also to be sharing some of those lesson learned with other parts of the region.

So definitely we are quite open to that one. And I think we are really open to that, and whatever we produce is up there on the website. So maybe the question is going to be the communication, and the CDA also has got its website with all the information about what project,

different partners are conducting, all of this is there, so feel free to get whatever information there and also have contact with us if you need us. Thank you.

KAREL DOUGLAS:

Thank you, Pierre. The takeaway for me is that as you said, no more talk, there's I guess an abundance of talk and sometimes less action. So I think we have to flip the equation and ensure that there is more action, and you do see the results of a lot of those conversations that were taking place. And I would just say even today is a perfect example of that, in the sense that we have some fantastic ideas, and we certainly see the issues, those issues considering is ccTLDs and internet governance and even yesterday at Smart Africa. And there's so much positivity that it'll be a shame if we did not translate that and the energy into some actionable initiatives.

So I guess this is why we have these sessions. Capacity building, these are the issues, but hopefully we will be able to translate those things into some tangible results so that maybe after today and even tomorrow and between now and the next session, you did say the next session, there are some activities. But those would translate into solid initiatives and would see programs so that you did say Africa is underserved in many ways, but we want to see that within the next few years not even years, maybe months transform so that it is not an underserved region and other areas of the world. But thank you for the fantastic question. So are there any more questions?

CHRISTINE ARIDA: So I think in the few minutes that we have, if there is no one pressing comment, I thank you, Karel. I would like to give the floor back to Rodrigue for final remarks.

RODRIGUE GUILLEMDE: Yes, thank you very much, Christine. It's really a good session we had here, and we hear lot of things, lot of recommendations. When I'm listening, the recommendation point summary we shared, it was really credible for us. It's as Karel says, we don't need really to be focused on the speech, on the discussion, but we need to have really an action plan to move forward and to have concrete action to impact. This is what you want. Because as you mentioned, during few years ago, we made lot of meetings during ICANN meeting, we talk a lot.

But I think that we need really to go straight in real concrete action, and I think that the initiative on CDA coalition, the initiative on Smart Africa action we're trying to build will be a response on that. This is why I wanted to invite each of you from government, from international organization to come with us for this adventure. This is very important for us, and this is my last word, just to invite everybody to involve, to try to do their best to build something concrete. This is what I want to share, Christine. And I want to thank you all again to attend this important meeting for African people. And yes, we are really happy and we are here, we are available for the next steps. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Thank you very much, Rodrigue. And we are already one minute over time, but I see a hand from Papua New Guinea. Okay, it went down. Do you want to go? It's okay. Please.

RUSSELL WORUBA: No, I just want to say thank you, chair. Thank you for this. From us in the Pacific, we are trying to put together a declaration, already has gone to a Pacific Island forum leaders meeting, and we are now putting together an action plan. We're trying to standardize policies across our countries, data exchange, across border data flows so that it'll allow us, and of course DNS, our architecture, and all that. So I think this is a very good learning for us and I want to thank our colleagues from Africa. Thank you, Pierre, and the team, and thank you as well, Karel, for all the good work you guys are doing. Thank you.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Thank you very much. And I will echo what was put in the chat from [01:30:56 - Akri] in Nigeria, that what is needed now is a serious action plan, is what we need right now. Thank you very much, this session is adjourned.

KAREL DOUGLAS: Well, let me just thank-- before we do go, I just take this opportunity to thank everybody, the GAC support staff, the translators who have, thank you so much, stayed beyond the time, as always, and for your time, patience, and energy in what you do, and the planning

committee, the many people who are not necessarily on stage here who helped in many, many ways to ensure that we had a successful session. So just want to thank you all. I'm not gonna call names because I do forget people and that's very bad. But thank you most of all, and for being here and staying the course. And now you are entitled to have drinks at the social. Thank you so much.

JULIA CHARVOLEN:

And everyone, we will see you back tomorrow at 9:00 AM for the session with ALAC. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]