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ICANN82 | CF – GAC Discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round  
Sunday, March 09, 2025 – 13:15 to 14:30 PST

JULIA CHARVOLEN

Hello and welcome to the ICANN82 GAC discussion on the Next Round session on Sunday 9, March, at 13:15 p.m. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. During the session, question or comments submitted in the chat will be read aloud if put in the proper form.

Remember to state your name and 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 and please make sure to mute all other devices when you are speaking. You may access all available features for this session in the Zoom toolbar. And with that, I will leave the floor to Nico Caballero, GAC Chair. Thank you and over to you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Julia. Welcome back, everyone. I hope you enjoyed your lunch. Welcome to the GAC discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round. We'll be discussing the IRT, that is Implementation Review Team for about 10 minutes and our distinguished colleague Nigel Hickson from the UK is going to walk us through. He's basically going to give us a topic lead update given the fact that he

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is the topic lead in that regard. Then we will have about 20 to 25 minutes with Kristy Buckley and welcome, Kristy. I understand Lars is also joining us today. Oh, awesome. Oh, perfect. Welcome, Larson. Please have a seat.

And then we'll allocate hopefully enough time for questions for the Q&A session. And then again, for half an hour, maybe 40 minutes, depending on how we do in terms of timing, we'll be discussing some topics of interest, as you can see on the screen related to the Applicant Guidebook language, among other things, early warnings and GAC advice, application fees, next round privacy policy, legal compliance check, and as suggested by the European Commission, most probably PICs and RVCs, that is public interest commitments and RVCs. Can somebody help me? Registry volunteer commitments.

So with that, welcome again, Lars, Kristy. It's always a pleasure to have you here. Let me give the floor to my distinguished colleague from the United Kingdom, Nigel, over to you.

NIGEL HICKSON

Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to all. We had a brief discussion before lunch on this, so I think I can dive straight in. We regard, this as an important session to update you where we are on the New gTLD program, to answer your questions and involve you in the dialogue. That's the crucial element, to involve you in this dialogue. If anyone is completely new to this subject, as I know that some of you are, then there's plenty of materials online. And as we go through some of the issues, you'll

be able to see the references, and there's a wealth of information about the whole New gTLD program online.

So I'd like to acknowledge the tremendous work that goes on within the ICANN community, of course, in general, and specifically within the Government Advisory Committee on this issue. Tracy Hackshaw, who's sitting over in the front, has done a wealth of work on Applicant Support, and we wouldn't be where we are today without his input. Rita from Canada has been the GAC lead on the Implementation Review Team. And again, as John's done so much work in this area, and we're immensely grateful to her. And so many other people have contributed to this work, and there's more work to contribute to as we go forward in the next year or so before the application session, the next application round launches.

So I think what I'll first do, if that's okay, is just go through a couple of slides on the implementation front, and then I'll go through fairly quickly, and that will give our good friend Lars, who many of you will know, Lars has been a great support to the GAC on, well, from the org on a whole range of issues, but particularly on this. And I'll go through these slides very briefly, and then I'll ask him to just give a few updates at the end, or just give an update at the end on things I've missed, and things that you ought to know about.

So first slide. Ah, that's it. Good, good. I'm getting slightly better. I warm up as the week goes on. Well, perhaps not. But anyway, the Implementation Review Team. So as those of you that were here this morning heard an important clarification from our good friend

Jorge from Switzerland, who reminded us, of course, that this is all implementation. So, sometimes in life we work and we work and we agree something, and then it has to be implemented. And sometimes as policy people just walk away at the implementation, we say, well, we've done all the difficult work, we've done all the political negotiations, we can just now walk away and let the technicians implement it, make sure it runs on the road or it flies through the air, or sinks in the sea or whatever.

And you can look at it like this. But in ICANN speak, the implementation is all important. And I was thinking of this earlier, going back to the policy development process on SubPro with 120, 140 recommendations, or I always get confused. And the tremendous work that was done in that area. But of course, some of the recommendations couldn't give figures, they couldn't give absolute detail, because that depended on other issues. So the implementation review is not just about writing a 400 page guidebook and making sure that the paragraphs coincide and the full stops are right, it really is adding quite a lot to the whole effort.

So it commenced its work, as it said, we appointed, as I say, Rita from Canada, and I'm the alternate. And the ICANN org team, led by Lars and others have been working with community members on a whole range of implementation issues. And some of you will know, hopefully, from previous meetings that we've had and discussions that various parts of the implementation guidebook have already gone out for public comment.

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So the IRT process was a process in which they took, well, Lars can explain, but literally hundreds of different issues and distilled them down into chapters on things like application fees, name collisions, etc, etc. And then developed the text that the applicant would need to understand what the process was, and then put it in a draft text for the Applicant Guidebook and various chapters have gone out for public consultation already. Indeed, the fourth iteration of the Applicant Guidebook that went out for public comment did so on the 14th of February, and closes on the 2nd of April. That's the one we discussed earlier. And later on in this session, we'll discuss some issues from that.

ICANN org is looking for input from the community, of course, on whether the proposed language is consistent with the relevant outputs from the final report of the SubPro process. So in other words, have the Implementation Review Team understood the policy recommendation? Have they understood it said red rather than yellow or whatever? So that's the first check. But also, there's a check if you like from the wider community on whether it actually makes sense. Hopefully it does because the community has been involved in its development.

But there might always be detail in which the community comes back and says, well, if this form is sent in before this form, it will only have three days to process therefore whatever, perhaps it needs a bit more. And GAC members, of course, have provided input into the AGB language submitted for public comment, and

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have been constantly reviewing the Applicant Guidebook. And we're very grateful for that.

So I just wanted-- this as my final slide on this bit, and I'll turn it over to Lars. This is a list of some of the recent updates that have gone out for public comment. They're called topics. Most of them are called topics. And so you can see the range of work that's taken place in the Implementation Review Team. Applicant fees, name collisions, all sorts of things. And we'll be touching on some of these later, specifically application fees. We'll be going into that in a bit more detail and also discussing registry voluntary commitments and PICs.

But at that point, I'll turn it over to Lars. He can give us a bit of an update. He's very good at telling us how many meetings there's been. He might even tell us how many started at three o'clock in the morning rather than five o'clock in the morning. But he'll give us a brief update and tell us crucially, what's going to happen in the next few months? What's going to happen in the next six to nine months in terms of the work of the Implementation Review Team running up to the publication of the final guidebook and the actual application window being opened, etc. But over to Lars.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you, Nigel. Hello, everyone. Thank you for having me. It's always a pleasure being here. As Nigel said, I'm going to briefly talk about the IT process. I don't know if there's another slide after this. Nigel talked about topics if they're up there. But as Nigel said, I'm going to pick it up from there. I think about 12 topics or so are out

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for public comment at the moment. We call that the fourth public comment section, if you want, meaning there have already been three. I think many GAC members have contributed to those public comments and submitted their feedback on those.

For those who may be newer to the process, just a quick iteration or repeat maybe that the implementation process is different than the policy development process. Obviously, the role here of the community is not to add new processes or develop new ideas. That has already happened during the SubPro policy development process during the PDP. Here, we are working ICANN org as the lead in the implementation, working with the community in the form of the Implementation Review Team, the IRT. The IRT really makes sure that the way that ICANN is implementing the recommendations that aligns with the intent and the wording of the community-developed and Board-approved recommendations.

I think that process was started in May. I don't think, I know. It was started in May 2023. We set ourselves a deadline to work through all around 300 outputs, recommendations, implementation guidances within two years to compile a complete draft Applicant Guidebook. And so, this fourth public comment section is the last tranche, if you want, of the different public comments that we had. We passed out these topics, as Nigel rightly said, into kind of four different packages.

Once we have received comments, Nigel said rightly, it closes on the 2nd of April, and we will review those public comments with the

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IRT as well. And then at the end of May, which you won't be surprised to hear, I know the last working day is the 30th of May, we aim to have the full Applicant Guidebook ready as a whole document and put that out for public comment one more time. That means that 99% of what is in that document will have been out for public comment already. And then 1% is essentially as you can imagine, if you pull 30, 40 different topics together, sometimes the language may have to be slightly adjusted, cross-references have to be inserted. But substantively, everything that has gone out or will go out at the end of May has already been out for public comment once.

That public comment period that will start in May will be a prolonged public comment period. We do not know yet how long the document will be. If you want to start a pool, I'd be very happy to contribute to that. But we're thinking in the 300-page range. So, I think it's going to be a lengthy document, a comprehensive document. The SubPro final report was also not a particularly short document. And so, turning that into an AGB, I think, inevitably leads to a more comprehensive document than we had in 2012. Personally, I think that's a good thing. I think there will be a lot more clarity processes set up, transparency and accountability are the forefront of the next round. And so, that will be reflected in the Applicant Guidebook as well.

Once that public comment period closes, we think about like this is going to happen at the end of July, around 55-60 days or so. We will then work with the IRT through those comments. And then, as Nigel had indicated, I think, on the previous slide, the Applicant



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Guidebook will then be put to the board for its consideration and what I'm going to say, hopefully, adoption. And the goal for that is to have that happen no later than December of this year. We have a recommendation that says the application around or say the other way around, the Applicant Guidebook has to be published four months before the round opens to give enough time for everybody to fully digest the final document. So, that means if we want to open the round, which is the current planning in April 26, even I can do the math, that means by April 25, the Applicant Guidebook has to be published.

I'm going to pause here for a second to see if there's questions. As you can imagine, I can go on for quite a bit longer. There may not be one.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much for that, Lars. Indeed. So, let's pause here in order to see if we have questions online or in the room. So far, so good. I don't see any hand online. Any questions, comments, thoughts in the room? Sure, sure. Go ahead, Lars.

LARS HOFFMANN

One thing that maybe if you think about it, you will ask that is translations of the Applicant Guidebook. So, the Applicant Guidebook will be translated into the ICANN languages. You may be aware as well from the capacity building from my colleagues that there's also the ICANN in your language project. So, hopefully, we'll have it actually in more than those ICANN languages

available. ICANN does operate in English. We're based in California. So, the authoritative version will remain, I think, true for all ICANN documents, obviously, the English version, but we will publish it in the other languages as well.

And we're already working with our great language team to make sure that they don't start translating the day after the Board adopts a 350-page document. All of you speak, I assume, more than one language. You can imagine how long that would take. So, they are already starting to pre-translate this. And so, we're trying to close the gap to as little as possible per policy recommendations. The translated documents would have to be published two months after the AGB, but we're really trying to close that gap to, I don't want to say nothing, but close to nothing. So, that all goes out as closely as possible together. Thanks.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Lars. I have Portugal.

ANA NEVES

I'm going to speak Portuguese. I'll be short, brief. It's a linguistic matter here. When you mentioned the official ICANN languages, you mean ICANN GAC languages? Is that what you meant? Thank you so much.

LARS HOFFMANN

I think I understood that, but I'm just going to wait for a second. No, the ICANN languages. So, Portuguese is not part of that, I believe.

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I think it's maybe where your question comes from. So, I think the ICANN languages are Arabic, Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, Chinese, English, and French. Did I leave one out? I'm really sorry. Arabic. Did I mention Arabic? So, on the Portuguese, we're working on the Portuguese to have that done as part of the ICANN in your language project. So, we expect that to also be in Portuguese, but it will not be part of the initial immediate translation of the guidebook. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Portugal, for the question. Thank you, Lars. Any other question? If not, then maybe we can move on to the next slide, please, Gulden. Back to you, Lars. Or is it Nigel? Oh, sorry, sorry. Nigel, back to you.

NIGEL HICKSON

And yes, the Applicant Support. So, we're coming on to the Applicant Support Program. We've got Tracy in the room and Kristy. I think Kristy-- Are you going to say anything first, Tracy or?

TRACY HACKSHAW

If I may, Nigel. No, not really. I'm just going to ask Kristy to maybe, if there's any possibility of giving some more details behind the information. Otherwise, we'll ask a question other than that. So, as an example, when you say the initiated applications coming in from Africa or from, there's one that's coming through from Asia,

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Pacific, Australia. Can you give some more specifics on that level of detail? Yeah, thanks.

NIGEL HICKSON

Thanks, Tracy. And over to Kristy, thanks for all you do. And about 15-20 minutes, if that's okay. Thank you so much.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Plenty. Hello, everyone. Greetings. I'm Kristy Buckley. I serve as the lead for the next round's Applicant Support Program, and happy to provide a status update on that program today. Next slide, please. And next slide.

So, just briefly to outline our agenda. We'll provide a status update, including the application statistics and the geographic distribution that you mentioned, Tracy, as well as an update on the overall timeline. We also have some slides on the ASP capacity development program, which we're happy to provide some updates on. I think we also shared some of those during ICANN81, but we have some more recent work to share as well. And then I don't believe we've briefed the GAC yet on our work on the ASP program monitoring and evaluation. So we have a couple of slides on that as well. And then we'll open it up for questions and discussion. Yeah. Next slide, please.

So before I get into the statistics update, I just wanted to mention that we did recently have a meeting with the ASP IRT, which is the implementation team subcommittee that's focused on the Applicant Support Program. And during that meeting, we covered applicant

readiness materials, the capacity development work, the program that Lars just spoke of, the New gTLDs in your language. And I also posted a link to that announcement in the chat if you're interested to learn more. We also provided a link to the pro bono service update and again, the monitoring evaluation. So if you're interested, there's a recording available on the wiki that's linked here in the slides if you want to go back to that recording. Next slide, please.

So this section provides an update on the application statistics, which is the most frequently asked question that we get. Next slide. So we have a couple of slides here that show the latest data. And as you might recall, if you tune into the monthly IRT meetings where we provide an update on our outreach and communications efforts, as well as the program statistics, we do update this data every month after the 19th of the month as we opened on the 19th of November. But because it's in the middle of an ICANN meeting, we wanted to give you the latest. So these are the numbers that we have as of the 6th of March.

So you can see here we have 17 applications drafted, which refers to applications that have been started but not yet submitted any organizational information. We have 13 that have been initiated, which refers to applications that have submitted their organizational information. And then we have one that has been submitted, and that means that they're in review and they've submitted their application information for evaluation. As you can see here on this slide, we don't yet have any that are conditionally

or fully approved, but we do have one mentioned at the bottom, an applicant that has withdrawn their application.

And Tracy, you asked for a little bit more information about what's behind these numbers. So if we go to the next slide, we have provided a bit more breakdown of the geographic distribution. So this slide shows you the total number of applications per region and then how many countries that spans. So for example, in Africa, we have three applications total from that region spanning two different countries.

In APAC, we have nine applications total spanning six different countries. Europe, it's one for one. Latin America, also one for one. North America, we have nine applications spanning two countries. And for reference, in case it's helpful, we included just this table from the 2012 round of ASP. We had three applications total for ASP in the last round. And so we've listed them there just as an example. Next slide.

So this section covers the timeline. And there are a few things that we want to note here. So first, the Applicant Support Program is open to receive applications. We opened on the 19th of November last year. And we are open through the 19th of November of this year. So there's still many more months for applicants to submit their application and to go through the evaluation process. And the idea is that applicants would receive their evaluation results in advance of applying for a New gTLD estimated in April of 2026 for the window opening.

We also included in the orange bar the non-financial support element. So we already have an applicant counselor available for inquiries that we receive about the Applicant Support Program through our global support. Anyone can email [globalsupport@icann.org](mailto:globalsupport@icann.org) with questions about ASP or the next round. And any specialized knowledge questions get escalated to the applicant counselor.

We've also been working on training materials. So you might have seen, I think, Bob and Chris presented yesterday in the capacity development session on the Champions Toolkit and also the Applicant Readiness Materials that we published. And that helps applicants figure out how to apply to the Applicant Support Program, what documentation they might need, and gives them some tools for a quick start.

That also evolves into the ASP Capacity Development Program, which I'll speak to in a moment in more detail, which then evolves into general gTLD applicant readiness. So we discovered that in building out an Applicant Capacity Development Program for supported applicants, very quickly, it's similar information that any prospective gTLD applicant might be interested to know. And so we're working on the synergies and complementarity between those two efforts.

And then lastly, the light blue line at the bottom talks about our communications engagement. And that has carried through on ASP and is now evolving into raising awareness and interest in the

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next round more broadly, as my colleagues Chris Mondini and Bob Ocheng' discussed yesterday. Next slide, please. Oh, yeah, please.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Can I stop you there for a second, Kristy? Let's see if we have any reactions in the room. Any questions regarding the timeline and the support package? I see two hands. I have the UPU and the CTU. Tracy, please go ahead.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Yeah, I was kind of waiting for the maybe the end of the presentation to bring this up, but maybe I could put it in now. So the question asked before was not related to the regions, but given that you already know the countries that have put in the applications, it would be good to understand that. For example, the Asia-Pacific-Australia region is very large and we get to know if that's who's put in applications there, what countries, since you have that data.

And secondly, this is a more substantive question. What would it take to move the applications from where they are into to progress them? Because as you're aware, we have a numeric target at which point we have to understand where the funds are and so on. And right now, there's only one that's moved forward. We don't have any sense yet of timing, etc. So as I was saying in a previous discussion, we could have like a CRM system to understand exactly where they actually are as a prospect.



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So are they actually going to apply or they're just submitting drafts and who knows that information. So that'll be useful to understand. And once you understand that, what would it take to progress them to the point where we can make an assessment as to we have less or more than we need to at this point in time. Otherwise, we'll queue up right to the end and you can see the problem that could happen. We'll have one, one, one, and then suddenly 50 or not. Thanks.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Do you want me to speak to that one or do you want to take the second question? Okay. Thanks for that, Tracy. Great questions as usual. So on the first question about the country level information, this also came up at the recent IRT meeting on the outreach and engagement update.

So in the ASP handbook, we have indicated that because the Applicant Support Program opens 18 months prior to the New gTLD application period opening, it's something that we're aware of just trying to maintain business confidentiality for applicants. And I recognize that some countries are very large and very populous, and so there wouldn't be any indication as to who applied. But we also recognize that this is a relatively small community. And so if you saw an application from a particular country, you may be able to guess who that was and also what string they might be applying for.

So in order to protect that, one of the things that we talked about doing with the IRT outreach call is that perhaps sharing via our

global stakeholder engagement regional vice presidents with our ALAC colleagues where should we be focusing more attention on particular countries in their region so that they can assist with that effort, rather than publishing a list of where we're seeing applications from on a country level basis. So that's where we're currently at in terms of information and trying to be more transparent about when we see nine applications across Asia Pacific, it is from more than one country, right? It's across six different countries. But I realize that folks that are trying to assist with the outreach and engagement efforts may need a bit more information about where they should be focusing their time and energy and efforts.

So I would say to GAC colleagues that are interested to assist with that, working with your regional vice presidents from our global stakeholder engagement teams to get some more direction or guidance from them or opportunities for where you might be able to assist, I think would be a great opportunity. And we would very much thank you for your help with that.

Tracy, on your second question, what will it take to actually get applications through the pipeline? It's an excellent question. So we have already reached out to the applicants that have drafted or initiated via our applicant counselor to let them know of the ASP applicant readiness materials that are available on our website and translated into other languages in case that's helpful for them in completing their ASP application.

We also have our global support team answering questions that we get from applicants, can we use this document instead of that document? And so we're seeing people active in the system and trying to make their way through the process. But it is something that we are actively monitoring and trying to be very communicative about and helpful and proactive around because we want people to make their way through the application process and through to the end.

That said, I think a lot of us understand that human nature is such that people tend to wait until the last minute, no matter what you do. And it is something that we have prepared for in terms of it may be the final weeks of the ASP application submission period that we see the vast majority and volume of applications. And so our team needs to be ready to scale in order to process those applications and evaluate them in a timely manner so that everyone has ideally their evaluation results prior to the gTLD application window opening. So I hope that answers your question.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much, Kristy. Thank you, UPU, for the very important question. UPU, for the benefit of the new 60 GAC members is Universal Postal Union. Speaking of which, I'll give the floor now to Nigel Cassimire from the CTU Caribbean Telecommunications Union. Go ahead, Nigel. Thank you.

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NIGEL CASSIMIRE

Thank you very much, Nico. Sorry, I couldn't be with you all in Seattle, but I'll follow online as best I can. Quick question for Kristy. Just wondering, is there any need to close the ASP program in November, 2025 if the budget is not exhausted? Thanks.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

That's a good question. I think we would probably have to look at that question if and when that scenario happened and the time came. We structured it so that it would close prior to the New gTLD round opening so that everyone would be assured if they qualified for support, and if so, how much support. Because as you might recall, there's a range in the handbook following the guidance from the GNSO guidance process for ASP that we should set a minimum floor of the discount of support and a maximum. And so we have 75-85% range. So I think it gives folks more certainty if they have a sense of whether they've qualified or not.

But I think you bring up a good point. Therefore, in this scenario where we have not exceeded our budget yet and we're still looking to get applications through the pipeline, the risk with that is that the gTLD application period may open while they're still waiting for evaluation results for ASP.

We talked with our colleagues running the gTLD program about what to do in that scenario. And one option that we came up with is that if an applicant is still awaiting their ASP evaluation results by the time they have to submit their gTLD application, they could submit it without payment and it would be put on hold until they get the results of their ASP application and then they can submit

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whatever the fee would be if it's discounted or not at that point and then their application could proceed. So that could be one way of addressing that scenario that our colleague raises. But yeah, great question. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, CTU. I have two more questions, Bangladesh and Australia. Please be brief because we need to continue with the presentation. But go ahead, please, Bangladesh.

DR SHAMSUZZOHA

Thank you, Chair. This is Shamsuzzoha from Bangladesh. I just need one clarification. The ASP application is already started and it will be closed by November this year, and then the gTLD application in the next year. In parallel, I see that there is a RSP evaluation and also the RSP evaluation is starting next year. Is there any relationship or relevance between these two processes, especially from the viewpoint of the ASP applicant?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

That's a great question. So I'm not going to speak on behalf of my RSP colleagues, but I would say that from an ASP perspective, we would want the registry service providers that have been pre-evaluated, we want the list of that to be published prior to the gTLD application window opening and also so that supported applicants will have a list of pre-evaluated RSPs to choose from and also time to negotiate with them if they choose to use one of those providers.

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So there's some symmetry between ASP and RSP for those reasons, although RSP is on a slightly different application window and evaluation period timeline so that they can come up with a published list of pre-evaluated RSPs prior to the window opening. Does that answer your question?

DR SHAMSUZZOHA

Thank you. Thank you very much.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you. Okay. Thank you, Bangladesh. Thank you, Kristy. We'll take one more question from Australia and then we need to continue with the presentation. Go ahead, please, Australia.

INGRAM NIBLOCK

Ingram Niblock from Australia. I was just wondering, you said that you've reached out to some of the applicants in draft. I was just wondering what have they told you about the reasons or what have they told you about why their application hasn't been submitted? Is it language or complexity or what you heard from them?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

That's a great question. So I have not interacted with applicants directly. This is through our global support team and our applicant counselor. As far as I know, the last I checked, we haven't heard responses back saying, thank you for these materials. I'm having trouble with X or Y. But in fact, I'll speak to a piece of that actually when I talk about the monitoring and evaluation of the program,

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because that's a key element that we are looking to draw out of applicants to identify where they might be having challenges or issues. So yeah, I'll speak to that in a minute. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

So thank you for that, Australia. We need to continue now with the ASP capacity development program. Are you going to be speaking about that as well? Over to you then.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thanks, Nico. So next slide, this section of the presentation talks about the capacity development program. We have actually many more slides that we could have shared, but for the sake of time, we wanted to just bring it up a level. We shared some of this initial thinking back at ICANN81. But this slide here shows you the framework that we've been working with for the capacity development. So our aim is to provide a variety of tools and resources, recognizing that different people learn and process information in different ways.

We also want to help inform the broader gTLD applicant readiness efforts, recognizing that a lot of prospective applicants may need assistance or information to better understand how to prepare a gTLD application. But we also want to maintain the business confidentiality or protect that confidentiality for supported applicants. So we also have to be careful about how we think about introducing supported applicants to the broader community or to

pro bono service providers in a way that protects their business confidentiality.

So here you'll see a map of different aspects that we're working on. So one is a welcome kit, which is a toolkit once applicants qualify for support, which will have a roadmap of the steps that they can follow to build their own capacity to prepare their gTLD application. They also have access to an applicant counselor. Part of that roadmap will include self-directed learning content. So system guides, ICANN-learn trainings that have been curated into a syllabus, as well as knowledge articles and access to frequently asked questions.

We've also been brainstorming about some special topic sessions. So we know that there are a number of more tricky topics or more complex topics or higher interest topics to prospective applicants that we may want to do some special sessions on. So that could be a webinar, for example, where we bring some experts in, even from industry or the community itself. We'll also have, of course, the ICANN meetings and helping people enter those spaces potentially as newcomers. We have a lot of experience drawing from those existing programs that we can use.

We're also in the process of recruiting pro bono professional services and mentors. So you've seen that announcement on our website and we have seen a good number of registrations for that. We haven't published that yet because we're hoping to align that with the first applicants that qualify for support so that they have prioritized access to those pro bono service providers. And then



working hopefully in conjunction with the community, providing opportunities for introductions, connections, networking opportunities as we get to the gTLD application and post application where protecting business confidentiality of support applicants is no longer a factor.

So this at a high level maps out what we've been working on, on capacity development. And I have a couple more slides just to give you a snapshot into a bit more detail. So the next slide shows the learning objectives that we have articulated. I think you might have to press. I think there's some animation on these. Thank you.

So this articulates the learning objectives about having to navigate all of that information that Lars talked about earlier. Best guess at what the Applicant Guidebook is in terms of the total number of pages. But suffice it to say it will be a lot of information to navigate. And so helping folks figure out how to do that on their own. We also want them to understand the requirements of the New gTLD program and the processes to apply for a gTLD. And also ensure that they're making informed decisions about how to allocate and obtain resources to apply.

We also want to provide opportunities for them to follow ICANN's multi-stakeholder processes and ideally be involved in the next round work. And lastly, we want to help them understand what it takes to serve as a registry operator and how to connect with and learn from existing registry operators as appropriate once they're in the post-application phase.

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So that summarizes our learning objectives. And then the next slide, I just wanted to provide a snapshot again of the applicant counselor role. So this is something that the GAC previously has asked a lot about. And so this slide summarizes what would be in scope and what would be out of scope for the applicant counselor role. As I mentioned earlier, this person is already available for supported applicants and receives escalated questions through our global support team.

We have many more slides that we could have shared on capacity development, but for the sake of time, we'll move on to the program monitoring and evaluation. But Nico, did you want to pause here for any questions or should we keep going?

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Keep going. Yeah, please keep.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

So the next section is about program monitoring and evaluation. And the next slide just gives a little bit of background context on this. So as you might recall, the GNSO guidance process or GGP for ASP was initiated in 2022 and was tasked with articulating what success looks like for Applicant Support, including what data and metrics should be collected and analyzed to assess the program. And we had the starting point for the GGP was the SubPro final report implementation guidance, which listed out a number of different data and metrics that we could collect to evaluate the Applicant Support Program.

So the GGP final report recommends tracking metrics. Thank you. I'll slow down. Sorry. Including click throughs. So that would be if they come to the website or they might click on the applicant checklist for ASP or the system guide to help them navigate their ASP application. It would allow us to track the number of click throughs and downloads of that. Also tracking the number of inquiries that we're receiving, for example, through our global support team, as well as registrations to get more information. And lastly, surveying of ASP applicants, including those who ultimately chose not to apply. So we're basing the work on monitoring and evaluation on the GGP final report here. And the next slide just talks a little bit more about the work that we're doing on that.

So in support of that effort, ICANN has procured a researcher and we've developed a draft evaluation framework, and we'll provide the programmatic data for that analysis. And in line with the GGP final report recommendations, this effort on ASP monitoring and evaluation will explore a number of different aspects of the program. So this includes our communications and outreach efforts, ASP program development, the application system for the Applicant Support Program, as well as the capacity development resources, the pro bono services, and the applicant counselor.

This continuous monitoring evaluation approach will also provide insights into the support applicants journey throughout the Applicant Support Program and the gTLD application life cycle. And to some of the questions earlier, I think one of the things that we want to do with this continuous monitoring and evaluation is in the surveys to ASP applicants, we especially want to hear from folks

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that may have applied and then withdrew their application. So why did they withdraw their application? Was that because they looked further into the requirements and they decided that a gTLD wasn't for them? Is it because they realized maybe they wouldn't qualify if they went all the way through the evaluation? Or is it some other reason?

We also want to hear from folks that recently went through the ASP application process of how did that work for them? Was it accessible? Did they feel like they had the information that they needed to complete that application process? Was that information accessible and easily digestible for them? So those are the types of questions that we'll be looking to survey.

And I think a lot of folks think about evaluations as a postmortem, so something you do after a program is finished. In this case, we're conducting the evaluation and monitoring as the program is running, in large part because if we wait a year or a year and a half to contact applicants, they may no longer be contactable or they may forget what their experience with the system or application process was like. And so we're likely to get fresher and more accurate data if we try to survey applicants as they're going through the process. So with that, I think we'll just stop and see if there's any questions. Thank you so much for having me today.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Oh, no, thank you, Kristy, for that very detailed and nuanced presentation. For the Q&A session, correct me if I'm wrong, Nigel, but I guess Tracy Hackshaw from the UPU will be walking us

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through the Q&A and discussion. Is that right, Tracy? Sorry, sorry. Over to you, Nigel.

NIGEL HICKSON

Yeah, no, thank you very much. And if there is any very brief factual questions, then Tracy or Kristy can answer them. But I'm keen to get on to the matters of interest in terms of the Applicant Guidebook, because several people have asked for these to be highlighted, and we've only got 35 minutes.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Sure, sure. Tracy, anything to add at this point before I give the floor to Nigel?

TRACY HACKSHAW

No, I just wanted to say thank you, Kristy, for the presentation. I hope we can get some traction on the movement of the applications. I think that'd be very helpful, knowing the timeline that is in front of us. And I guess on the final aspect of communications, I know you're not the communications person. I think there's some feedback coming in from members that I can't probably do a little more outreach to the GAC members themselves. So when they go into communities, into countries, the GAC can actually help open doors for them or at least point out certain areas. And if that's not happening, maybe it should happen or more. So that's just some feedback we're getting internally. Thanks.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thanks, Tracy. I'm happy to take that back. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Perfect. Thank you so much, Tracy. And thank you again, Kristy. You're more than welcome to stay with us, but I understand you have other things to do. So please go ahead, because this is an internal GAC discussion from now on. Thank you so much. Nigel, over to you.

NIGEL HICKSON

Yes, thanks very much. And that was a really good session. And we're not precluding further discussions, of course, on the Applicant Support Program. There's a lot of work to do. But the key message that comes out of all this is that we are the GAC members. We have a responsibility. It's a shame we don't know the countries as we could, but we know the regional breakdown. So we need to be out there and helping the GAC global stakeholder engagement people. Sorry, the ICANN global stakeholder engagement people, the government engagement team, we've got a collective effort to work on here.

Okay, topics of interest on New gTLDs. I think what I'll do, I'll read through some of this. And anyone that's got questions or comments, just shove up your hand as we go through. I think that's probably the best idea. So early warnings and GAC advice. So next slide, please.

So we've discussed this briefly before. And we noted yesterday in the capacity building session, there's two aspects of this. An early warning is effectively what it says on the tin, if you like, can come from one or GAC members, and the applicant will be informed. So an early warning is when reveal day takes place. And this all has to be, this will all be in the timeline. So the applications come in, say, in March 2026, they're evaluated, and some work has to go on. And then in April or May or whenever, there's a reveal date when all the names are revealed, and we can all look at them.

And some countries may not like some of the names, it might refer to geo regions or whatever. And they can work with other countries on their own, and they can raise an early warning. And this is just to say, we might have a potential concern here, that that concern, then is made clear to the applicant and there can be discussions between the GAC member or members and the applicant. Indeed, there need to be discussions in terms of resolving problems.

GAC advice comes a bit later on. And GAC advice comes when the GAC have had time to discuss the different range of application and names, and to also consider the early warnings that have been given by individual countries. And then GAC advice in the usual way, if there's consensus within the GAC, that a string applied for whatever it's going to be, .bluecan is not acceptable. And therefore, advice is given back to the ICANN Board on that.

So that's what early warnings and GAC advice are, as I say, in this summary or not summary in this document that's going to be produced with a timeline, this will all be explained. So it's clear

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when the responsibilities of governments take place on this. Any questions on that?

NICOLAS CABALLERO

We have about two or three minutes for questions on this issue. So this would be a very good time. And I'm talking about early warnings. I see there UPU, go ahead.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Yes, thank you. So I agree with Nigel on this in particular. I was one of the GAC members who was involved in this in 2011 or thereabouts. It is a very intense process, not just doing the early warnings itself, and I understand from countries who actually prepare them, but actually discussing them in the GAC itself and understanding what it is that we're talking about here, because as you know, countries do the early warnings, not the GAC itself.

So it's individual countries who are responsible for doing early warnings, but it will be discussed in the GAC and presented in the GAC. And much of this has to be done with training on the system, because you have to understand what the early warning system looks like. It's a piece of software that you have to learn and issue early warnings, and you have to understand exactly why you can issue early warnings. It can't just be, I don't like a string. It has to be done for certain criteria.

So I 100% agree with this idea of having capacity development on it. But the point I wanted to raise is that, as I said before, it might be really useful to have the countries who did this in 2011 bring



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them back to the table to have them explain how they did the process. And I mean the individuals who were there and others. It might be a hard thing to do, but it would be really helpful to get those, what I would call experts in this area to present to us on this. I don't know how possible that would be, but I would recommend that strongly. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you. UPU, I have the European Commission next.

GEMMA CAROLILLO

Thank you very much, Nico. Gemma Carolillo for the European Commission. I have a quick question. I understood from the previous session that we had a lot of examples of early warnings from the previous round. Does anyone know whether we had examples of GAC advice? Because GAC advice, as we know, it's consensus advice. I would be interested to know.

NIGEL HICKSON

Thanks. And perhaps after this answer, we can go on to the next slide. Gemma, there is a lot of-- in the Beijing communique in particular, which was 2012, there's a lot of information in there. Sorry, 2013. There's a lot of information in the Beijing communique, but there might be in the communique before that. But we can find information.

Perhaps we could go on to the next topic. Application fees. So, this is down because there was some discussion on this before. It's

gone out. It's one of the parts of the Applicant Guidebook that's gone out for public consultation. And as we heard, the fee level has been provisionally set at 226,000. Now, this is the application fee.

Now, of course, there's other monies concerned for the applicant in securing the necessary support services, etc. And the applicant might have to go through further evaluations as well, which would cost extra money if they're, for instance, applying for a geographical name, or if they're applying for a name that will be considered under the community program, community evaluation program.

The idea is that these costs are neutral for ICANN. It's based on 1,000. And if there are 2,000 names, then at some point, there'll be refunds made to the applicants that add applicants in the process. And as I say, it's helpful consultation. There is also refunds, depending on where in the process an applicant, if you like, withdraws their name, withdraws their application. And as Kristy said earlier, there might be lots of reasons for this. The economic climate might change. The company economics might change, or the dynamics might change. Or when the applicant finds out that they're in contention sets, they're going to have to potentially take part in an auction to secure the name that they've applied for, then they might decide at that point to withdraw.

And the fees vary from 65% back after, I think it's 10 days, to 35%, and then 20%. And then again, they're out to consultation. And some have argued that there should be a higher fee, sorry, a higher refund, right at the beginning of the program, where perhaps the

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applicant just wants to withdraw after, say, a week or so. Okay, any questions on this bit?

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you for that, Nigel. European Commission, is that an old hand? Oh, okay. So I have Germany and India. Germany, please go ahead.

RUDY NOLDE

Rudy Nolde, Germany for the record. Nigel, you just mentioned the refunds, and that some have argued it should be higher. As far as I know, in the last round, it was up to 80%. For example, when there was a GAC early warning, and the applicant would withdraw, then there would be a refund of 80%. I just want to know, if you know, was there a rationale why they lowered the percentage to up to 65% or even less?

NIGEL HICKSON

Yes, thank you so much, Germany and Rudy. Yes, I mean, it was considered that having multiple percentages for different reasons might be confusing. So they wanted to set a level after so many days. And these days would coincide with the various processes that ICANN have to undertake. So even if I send in an application on day one, and then on day five, decide that was a bad idea, it must have been after a stiff drink, and want to withdraw it. I might not have done any more work, but ICANN has already put the balls in motion, if you like, and there's various assessments already being carried out and translations, etc, etc. So there's always some

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costs right at the beginning of the process. But this is out for public consultation. And we have the ability as the GAC to say, we would prefer a higher refund for some reason or whatever.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Germany. Thank you, Nigel. I have India next.

SUSHIL PAL

Thank you. As Nigel said, I think apart from the basic application fee, there are other fees as well I think which the applicant may have to pay. So then in that case, should we as a GAC, and since these all are paid services, should we impress upon ICANN to publish the rates for other fees which may arise, like community evaluation process or brand evaluation or whatever?

That's one. And the second thing, should the rate be same for the applicants which are receiving support under ASP? And for those who are commercial entities, or should there be a lower rate for the applicants under the ASP program as well?

NIGEL HICKSON

Thank you, India. I mean, again, to be short, I mean, the overall policy, of course, has already been laid down in the SubPro process. So the IRT is not going back over policy. But the figures for different types of evaluation will be made known in the Applicant Guidebook before applicants put in their applications.

In terms of the Applicant Support Program, as Kristy said, there's a proposal, well, the Applicant Guidebook at the moment says that

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the fee reduction is between 75-85%. So if you pass the Applicant Support Program, then your application fee rather than 227 is 35k or whatever. Should we go on to the next?

SUSHIL PAL

That's not the question I was asking Nigel. I'm sorry. My question was not about the reduction in the applicant fee. It was about the other fee, the other incidental fee, which is conditional approvals, etc. Right? I think I was asking whether the fee for the conditional approvals, should there be also a discount for those applicants which are availing ASPs? I'm not asking for the fee for the application. And that's simply clear.

NIGEL HICKSON

Yeah, sorry, I don't understand. Perhaps we can discuss it offline.

SUSHIL PAL

I'll repeat. I'm sorry. There are other paid services like conditional evaluations, right? Apart from the application fee, the applicant may be required to pay some other fee, such as for community evaluation process.

NIGEL HICKSON

I'm with you. Those fees will be published, but they're not discounted for Applicant Support.

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SUSHIL PAL

Okay, but then can we impress upon them to publish it as soon as possible so that the applicant has a complete visibility? GAC, we should impress upon them to publish or even that is a part of the policy and we are past that stage?

NIGEL HICKSON

No, I don't think we're past that stage, but we'll discuss it.

SUSHIL PAL

So that the applicant has a complete transparency and visibility on the application fee.

NIGEL HICKSON

I think I understand where you're coming from.

SUSHIL PAL

Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON

Thank you. On to the next one. So after application fee. So this was a point brought up by our Russian colleague at the last meeting. So essentially, ICANN, as you know, has a privacy policy. And because they're processing personal information of applicants, they do this in accordance, in the Applicant Guidebook, it says they're going to do this in accordance with the GDPR where appropriate. And the information will be stored in the US. And the policy is outlined in sections 4 and 6 of the privacy policy. And the Russian Federation raised the concern on the language used in this

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part of the Applicant Guidebook. So perhaps they'd like to make their point. And I'm sorry, we've got so little time.

NICOLAS CABALLERO                      So is the Russian Federation in the room or online? Mr. Erokhin, would you like to say anything in that regard?

VIACHESLAV EROKHIN                      Yes.

NICOLAS CABALLERO                      Okay, the floor is yours. Please go ahead.

VIACHESLAV EROKHIN                      For protocol, Viacheslav Erokhin, Russian Federation, I will speak Russian. Indeed, we do have some concerns related to the document called the privacy policy. In the document, one can find a description of how ICANN collects and uses personal information that is provided by or collected by individuals in relationship to the next round of the gTLD program. So this is what the document states.

At the same time, we understand that the applicants will be applying from different countries. The document also contains references to European legislation pertaining to the protection of private data. This is the GDPR. Privacy policy does not mention the need to consider norms and legislation from other countries. There isn't even a general statement about the need to use the

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appropriate legislation from other jurisdictions. We believe that this approach can be considered selective, that it runs against the principles of equality in protecting privacy data of applicants coming from various different countries. So Russian Federation calls to work further on this document in order to ensure that the privacy policy reflects the appropriate norms from various jurisdictions. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Mr. Erokhin. Thank you, Russian Federation. Well noted. Nigel, any reactions?

NIGEL HICKSON

Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think I'm really in a position to give a substantive reaction and perhaps this needs a further dialogue. But essentially, as is said in the privacy document, it's the country where the data is being processed. So if ICANN decided for some reason that they wanted to conduct the whole of this Applicant Support Program, sorry, this whole of this applicant program, this whole of this subprogram in a completely different country, then they would presumably evoke the legislation of that country they were doing the work in and storing the data.

But because they're doing it in the US, they've elected to use the GDPR as the standard of data protection to use. I mean, where the data comes from, what country is sending the US the data is perhaps not. But I'm sure those could give a better explanation. But perhaps we could-- Well, what do you suggest, Mr. Chairman?



NICOLAS CABALLERO I see your hand up. Russia, would you like to respond to that? Please go ahead.

VIACHESLAV EROKHIN Yes, I want to react. Yes, the operation will take place in the US. But we are talking about European legislation. And it's not clear why GDPR uses only exclusive legislation cooperation in the US.

NIGEL HICKSON Okay. No, thank you. Thank you very much. Well, I've got no other comments from the floor. So perhaps the next point was yours as well. So I see Gemma in India.

NICOLAS CABALLERO Yes, and we're running, absolutely running out of time. So I suggest you finish with the presentation. And then we'll take European Commission in India. And then we'll open the floor. Right. So please go ahead, Nigel. For the sake of time.

NIGEL HICKSON Yeah, thank you. If we could have the next slide. Thank you so much. The next slide was also a point raised by the Russian Federation. But it's worth just going over what the Applicant Guidebook says in this area, which I don't think will surprise many people. ICANN has confirmed that the current situation, because ICANN is based in the US, of complying with the OFAC and the SDP

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provisions, which they do anyway, and we've discussed before, in ICANN will apply to the gTLD program, the New gTLD program as well. And they put this down because it affects the ability of them, of ICANN to potentially contract with entities from countries covered by those programs. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much. And we already have a queue. I have the European Commission, then India and then China. Please be brief. We're running out of time. Go ahead, please.

GEMMA CAROLILLO

Thank you very much, Nico. Gemma Carolillo for the European Commission. I think there are two separate issues. One issue is the language used in the Applicant Guidebook. And this is one issue, and I understand that specific references to data protection legislation from one region or one country may not be appropriate. Just for sake of giving an example, in the context of other documents, we have recommended avoiding references to GDPR only because there are other data protection regimes to take into account. This was in the context of the registration data policy, just to give an example.

The other thing is what the applicable law will, in the end, be when the applications will be processed. And this is, I would say, quite an intricate issue that I'm not sure colleagues in the GAC room can address, because clearly, when there is a data protection statement, the data subject is informed about the applicable data

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protection regime that the organization collecting the data, in this case ICANN, is going to use. But there might be specificities concerning to the regions from where the data subject comes. And this, I don't think this is something, at least not us from the GDPR region or others can very easily speak to it. But I'm sure that the ICANN legal team has an answer to that. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much for that, European Commission. I have India and then China.

SUSHIL PAL

Thank you, Chair. I think, thanks to the EU colleague for clarifying that. I think the suggestion is welcome that the specific references to one particular regulations of a country may should be avoided, or maybe we can add EU GDPR and maybe other national data protection regulations wherever they exist.

With regard to the other comment of the Russian colleague regarding the legal compliances, I think maybe we need to find, we should find a way out. You know, we understand that it is to be governed by the regulations, by the laws of the US, Californian laws. However, keeping in view the fact, the spirits of actually the open internet and the fact that the innocent user of a country which may be sanctioned, they should not be kind of impacted by the internet access. And that is the intent of the internet governance. So we need to find a way out. I mean, how do we do it? I think that's open, something subject to the GAC colleagues. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much, India. China? And I need to close the queue here. China, go ahead.

GUO FENG

Thank you, Chair. GUO Feng from China for the record. Very quickly. First, I want to say what has been raised by Russian Federation is a very interesting topic. But here, taking the last opportunity, perhaps I would like to share a few thoughts, but quickly about the early warning issue.

With regard to the current draft AGB released by ICANN, we know that early warning and GAC advice reflects the consultations of previous GAC engagement with the Board and the community. Here I have two thoughts. First one is, however, I have not seen the specific operation procedures and the templates for raising early warnings from any GAC member and the GAC advice in the draft AGB. So I think there will be relevant discussions needed on internal processes within the GAC in the near future.

Another thing is, according to the AGB language, the GAC member's early warning is only a notice or a notification to the applicant, and will not have a direct impact on the application. My reaction here is that this notice can be taken into account by the review panel, which conducts application assessments. So I think it would be appropriate that the review panel shall consider the GAC member's early warning when it conducts application assessments. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much, China. Thank you, everyone. As a matter of fact, we need to wrap up the session here. I would say that this last slide would need a full session to discuss and an army of lawyers in the room trying to help us get some sort of interpretation about the legal nuances. But that's all we have time for. Thank you so much, Nigel, for walking us through the details. Any final words?

NIGEL HICKSON

I just want to apologize that we didn't get right through the agenda. We didn't pick up RVCs and PICs. We can certainly do that next time. Or if there's substantive interest in some of these issues that are raised by the guidebook, we can have an intersessional webinar or something like that. So apologies, Gemma, that we didn't reach it. But thanks, everyone, for your participation. This is exactly what we wanted to have this input. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

So thank you, everyone. We're wrapping up the session here. We're going to take a 25-minute break. Please be back at 3 p.m. for the session with the GNSO. Thank you so much.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**