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ICANN84 | AGM – GAC: Discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round (2 of 2)  
Sunday, October 26, 2025 – 9:00 to 10:00 IST

JULIA CHARVOLEN

Welcome to the second GAC discussion on new gTLD program Next Round on Sunday, 26 October at 09:00 AM local time. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behaviour, ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

During this session, questions or comments will be only read aloud if submitted in the proper form in the Zoom chat pod. Interpretation for this session will include all six human languages and Portuguese. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in the Zoom room and please state your name for the record and the language you will be speaking when speaking a language other than English. And please speak at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation. I will now hand the floor over to Nicolas Caballero, GAC Chair. Thank you. And over to you, Nico.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Julia. Welcome back, everyone. Welcome to this second session. We're going to be discussing the new gTLD program in depth. And for that, we have a fantastic team. We have Marika Konings. We have Lars Hoffmann to my right and Christy Buckley. They're going to walk us through the details and nuances of the—

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and some program updates as far as I understand Marika? And right after that, we'll open the floor for a Q&A, for a reasonable Q&A session.

So that's the first part of the session. And the second part, as you can see on the screen, we'll be discussing and reviewing the whole early warnings process. And the idea is to have an interactive session there with lots of questions and most importantly ideas that might come up from the floor. We already received some good—actually very good feedback from many different countries. And that's greatly appreciated. So thank you so much for that. But without further ado, let me give the floor to—are you going to be starting, Marika? So for the new gTLD program update, I'll handle the floor to Marika Konings. All yours.

MARIKA KONINGS

Thank you very much, Nico. And hello, everyone. My name is Marika Konings. I'm the lead for the new gTLD program. And I'm here with some members of my team, but obviously we're a lot more working on the program. You already did a lot of deep diving during yesterday's sessions, but I think today we're taking it a slightly higher level up and just more looking overall on the program status, where things are at. Lars will cover some updates on the IRT. And Christy will then remind you of the work we've started and will continue doing in relation to readiness. So we can go to the next slide, please.

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So this is a slide that I think you've seen before. It's a very busy slide, but I would like you to take away from this that there are many elements that make up the program. You know a lot, I think, about the work that's being done on the applicant guidebook, but obviously there are other parts that need to come together for us to be able to open the window for applications in April 2026. I'm putting in the chat now a link to the status update that we produced just prior to this meeting, where for each of the projects that you see listed here on the left-hand side, an update on what work was done since the last meeting, what work we still have ahead of us, what are some of the challenges that we're facing or working through, so that you have that detail as you review how we're doing and tracking against our timeline.

This is also a way for us to report to you as the community, but also to the board and our steer co internally to show how we're doing against these different projects. We're tracking scope, schedule, resources, budget. As you can see, not everything is green here. I think this is really representing the reality. We want to be aware if there are challenges that the teams are facing so we can support them and help them through that. I think you're all aware that we've started building systems already right at the outset after the adoption of the original report, while work was still ongoing on the applicant guidebook. I always like to compare that to we're already basically flying the plane while we're still finalizing the manual, which actually means that while in flight there are some adjustments we need to make. So that is, of course, putting pressure

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on the team, but also noting that we have a really good and qualified team working on this, where we're working through those challenges. But again, you see here that there are some, obviously, that we still need to deal with. But overall, I think the takeaway here is we're still on track for opening in April 2026, and obviously adoption of the applicant guidebook, which we hope to happen later this week, will be a major step in that direction. If we can go to the next slide, please.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Just one thing, Marika, and I know we talked about this during the board meetings and everything, but for the benefit of the—if we can go back to the last slide, please. If you could please explain what the red dot there is for the benefit of my distinguished GAC colleagues who were not present in the board meetings.

MARIKA KONINGS

So red basically means a high-risk blocker at the moment, and that specific project, which is labeled post-contracting, focuses on the systems that need to be updated or scaled to be able to delegate new gTLDs once they have signed their contract. This is not something that is a dependency for the opening of the window, but obviously it is work that needs to get done to be able to delegate new gTLDs once they've signed a registry agreement. That's, for example, we need to make sure that the systems that we used for registry operators are able to handle variants, for example. So some systems need to be scaled because, of course, new contracted

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parties are coming on board. So that's what that project focuses on. We had some staffing changes in there, so the red dot represents that we're identifying resources for that. The good news is we've just contracted a new program manager for that work, so we do anticipate that we hopefully are able to switch the arrow to the right direction and move this back to yellow or even green. But that is basically what that is representing. Again, to indicate to our sponsors and the broader community that's where we're working through a challenge, but we fortunately got the support to move that quickly forward so that, again, it doesn't impact the rest of the elements in that project. So I hope that helps. I think now we can go to the next slide.

So this is a slide we've also shared, I think, previously and also is available in the report showing the critical path with the end goal here being the opening of the round in April 2026. So, again, there are a number of pieces that basically need to come together and need to be completed before we're able to do that. As mentioned, one aspect of that is applicant guidebook that needs to be finalized, and you see here at the latest by December, as I said, we do hope that the board adopts it at this meeting. But per our timeline, the final version needs to be posted at the latest by December to allow for, per the policy recommendations, four months for everyone to make sure they understand what the requirements are before we open the application window.

There are some other steps that we're completing. You've heard from Christy about the ASP program. That is in process. Similar to

registry service provider evaluation program is also a program that's already in the processing phase preparing for publishing qualified RSPs before we open the window. The one change I may want to point out here compared to previous versions that you may have seen is that the timing of the finalization of the base registry agreement has moved from December to March. This is to reflect that there are a couple of elements for the base registry agreement that we're still working through. Very specifically, there is still pending policy recommendations in relation to IDN variants that the board, I think, is considering later this week. There are some ancillary documents that need to be updated, such as the trademark clearinghouse specification. I think there's as well the registry transfer process. Again, those are things that we're working through. Because of that, we expect a complete base registry agreement to be finalized and published in March. But having said that, as I think you're all aware, the base registry agreement is currently out, or I think it's near closing, the second public comment period. So the bulk of that will already be in a near final state. So again, it's materials that applicants can already read through and understand what their obligations are. And again, we don't expect that to impact the opening of the round. It's just a change in the timing of impact, the opening of the round. It's just a change in the timing of impact. We don't expect that to impact the opening of the round. delivering that final base registry agreement. So no questions. I think I have one more slide, if I'm not mistaken.

So this is a bit of a more detailed view of the slide you saw on the previous one, where we're outlining what are some of those key dependencies in each of those milestones in the critical path. Again, most of these I think we've discussed with you, or you are already aware of. Obviously, if you have any questions, I'm happy to address those. As I said, the briefing that I shared in the chat has, I think, a lot more detail than we're able to cover here. But as you know, the team is always ready and available if you do have any further questions. And we always appreciate the opportunity to engage with you, so I think with that.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much for that. Marika, so the floor is still open for comments or questions directly to Marika in this case, before we give the floor to Christy or Lars. I don't see any hand online. Anybody in the room? Any comment or question? I don't see any hand, so that means that we're okay to move on. Lars, the floor is all yours.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you so much, Nico. Hello, everyone. Thank you for having us. I'll give a quick overview of the work status of the implementation review team. To those of you who are new to ICANN or these processes, just as a background, the ICANN community developed a lengthy and comprehensive final report through a policy development process that came to a conclusion, I think, in 2021, and the ICANN work together with the implementation review team, which is a community group, has been implementing these

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recommendations in the form of drafting the applicant guidebook. So this work started in May 2023. You see this here, this is our first meeting, 16th of May. The group has an overall membership of 125. It's an open group, so anybody is able to, or was able to, still is able to, sign up to the group. We had, so far, 161 meetings with the full IRT in addition to 32 sub-track meetings. These sub-tracks were on the ASP, on the Applicant Support Program, and on the Registry Service Program as well, the RSP, and we calculated, a little bit of a back of an envelope, 259 hours of meetings. This is really an amazing accomplishment, I think, from the ICANN community and obviously the staff as well. We have, here in the front row, three of them sitting there, Jared, Ariel, and Elisa. There's others as well who've been working on this very hard over the past two and a half years. The next slide, please.

So the team from the New gTLD Program, together with the IRT, has then come up with the, well, come up, worked very hard to draft the applicant guidebook. We had five public comment periods over the last two and a half years. Four of those were individual sections as they became ready or available, and then in May this year, the entire applicant guidebook draft was also out for public comment. We did implement, from the final report that I mentioned a moment ago, 41 different topics. There were over 300 outputs, recommendations and implementation guidances. And the final draft is available. We published that on the wiki page. And as you see here, a few statistics around that, 441 pages, we have seven modules, 12 appendixes. You see the module titles here on the slide. Overall, I think it's a very



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comprehensive and lengthy document. It builds on the applicant guidebook from 2012, but obviously has a lot of updates that are reflections of the policy recommendations that the community developed. The next slide, please.

Thank you. So the applicant guidebook, AGB, is the abbreviation for that. We posted a version, as I just said, on the wiki page for the IRT, a link is in the deck, so you can get to that from there, or go to the IRT wiki page. The board is considering this version. There are a couple of, well, there's one section which is a bracketed text still, and there's another section that is still outstanding, which are some rules around the dispute resolution providers. Those additions and the bracketed text, as well, will be resolved, hopefully, I'm confident about that, they will be resolved after the board considers this here in Dublin. So the version that is online right now, while comprehensive and we don't expect any substantive changes to the text anymore, there will be a couple of additions that will still be added after the board resolution hopefully approves the guidebook here in Dublin, and then we will publish the document in its final version, if you want, no later than the 30th of December, 2025. We're very much hoping that it will be before that, but as you may know, we've been working for over two and a half years now to open the round in April 26. We have policy recommendations that the guidebook has to be available at least four months before the opening of the round. So simple math dictates if we want to meet that, it can't be published later than 30th of December. So that is what the goal is, and I think we are very much on track to do so.

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The implementation review team will come to an end once the SubPro policy recommendations are implemented. The vast majority of those will be implemented as part of the guidebook. There's a few other items that still flow from those recommendations. You see them listed here in these sub-bullets at the bottom, and so those items we will still discuss with the IRT where applicable, and then publish these specifications and plans as well before the round opens in April 2026. So the IRT is coming to an end, but it's not quite done yet. On the next slide, you'll see what happens after the IRT. There will be a little overlap as well.

This is also a recommendation from the final report. The community has recommended to establish a predictability framework to make the program more transparent and predictable in terms of changes that may occur either before the round launches or while the program is underway, essentially after the guidebook has been approved. So part of that is the standing predictability implementation review team. SPIRT is the acronym for that. This is a body that is, I don't have the right verb for this. Founded, it's not the right word, chartered, I'm going to go with you, I'm sorry, by the GNSO Council. There's a call for volunteers that is open at the moment. We encourage everyone who's interested and eligible to sign up for that. You'll find more information here in the call for volunteers. Again, it's on the slide. There's also an ICANN announcement on the announcement page you can find. The role of this group is to work with ICANN in case there needs to be material changes to the program. What that constitutes, a material change,

is defined in the guidebook. So I encourage you to look that up as well. So that group is expected to be in place for the duration of the program and the round, and to, as I said, work with ICANN as detailed in the guidebook and also in the SPIRT charter. With that, I think I come to the end of my section. Obviously, any questions, well, probably going to be welcome.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much, Lars. Can we go back one slide, please, before I open the floor for comments or questions? Can we go back? So just, again, for the benefit of the new GAC representatives in the room, we have 32 new GAC representatives since Prague. So again, I just want to make sure everybody understands, everybody's familiar with the acronyms. Because I, myself, am having trouble understanding some of the acronyms. I'm okay with TMCH, Trademark Clearinghouse. I'm okay with IDN, Internationalized Domain Names, and so on. But for example, PICDRP, RRDRP, and TMPDDRP, and then DRSP at the beginning, and so on and so forth. So can we spend 45 seconds explaining very quickly the meaning of the acronyms?

LARS HOFFMANN

Where's Carla when you need her? She's the best with acronyms. So this is a good question here, and this is a good question here. And I'm the best with acronyms. I'm bidding a little bit of time, and Marika may be able to help me.

MARIKA KONINGS

So these are all dispute resolution policies that apply to different policies. I'm going to have to cheat as well. You have the first one, Marika. You can look for the second one in the meantime. So the first one is the Public Interest Commitment Dispute Resolution Procedure, PICDRP. The second is the Registration Restriction Dispute Resolution Policy. And then my guess is that the third one, Marika, will be a trademark situation.

LARS HOFFMANN

It's a Trademark Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure. These procedures have been in place during the last round as well. So there have been some updates to these following the SubPro report, but they're established resolution policies. Thanks.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much for that. So at this point, and thank you for the fantastic presentation, by the way, and congratulations to your team on the hard work and the hours and centuries spent working on this. So let me open the floor now for comments or questions. And I see Columbia. Please go ahead.

THIAGO DAL-TOE

Thank you, Nico. Thiago Dal-Toe for the record. Thank you so much, Lars, for the presentation and the team. Just to make sure that I understand, zit means no later than 30 December, the formal publication of the AGB. Is that the final version is going to be having

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some little tweaks from there to the opening of the round? And in any case, how are we in percentage-wise on the finalizing this AGB 90%, 95%, 80%? And is there a possibility that we won't make it? That there will be some issues pending?

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you for that. I think percentage-wise, I would have to look this up. But my guess is we are above 99% there's really three items that are missing. One are the dispute resolution provider rules and fees. You see the second bullet here. These are rules and fees. And these are passed on issues from these providers that we are in the process of finalizing with them. And we will publish that as soon as possible. I expect that to be happening in November, probably.

The second item is there is some IGO, INGO, international non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations' recommendations, the 2013 final report that established some protections around top-level domains for these organizations. So those recommendations are also being implemented as part of this applicant guidebook. There was some disagreement between the IRT and ICANN staff how these should be implemented. So per the procedures that are in place, this has been referred back to the GNSO council. And as soon as they tell us how we should interpret and implement those recommendations, we will do that accordingly. Again, the council has already been working very hard on this. We expect this to occur very soon, too.

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And then the third item is the date of the opening of the round. While we are firmly committed to April, we haven't set a date yet. But it will be between 1 and 30. And finally, then, how long the round is open. This is also a policy recommendation between 12 and 15 weeks. We're looking at that as well to also see when the round opens. We would like to align this as best as we can with ICANN 87, so the AGM next year, so that ideally the applied force strings are available to the community during the meeting so they can be reviewed and the public input period can be open during that time. We believe that might be helpful to everyone, including the GAC.

So those are really the three items that are outstanding. And I don't see any reason at this time why we wouldn't meet the 30th of December deadline.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you for that, Lars. Just to make sure I understand. So it's going to be April. Sometime during April, not May, not June, but still April. Is that correct?

LARS HOFFMANN

We are still holding out for April.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Just to make sure. So thank you so much for that. I have the European Commission, Switzerland and Indonesia.

MARTINA BARBERO

Thank you very much, Chair. This is Martina Barbero, European Commission for the Records. Just a minor note, but thank you very much for posting in the chat the proposal final version link. So we checked the text on GeoTLD fees, which is something we discussed yesterday. And Marika, we find the sentence that a final amount of the fees will be posted accordingly. But just to understand, so it means that in the final version of December, there will be the final amount of fees for the GeoTLD, and that would be it. So that's what we need to expect.

MARIKA KONINGS

Thank you for the question. So yes, we're currently working through the responses we received from the RFI on the basis that we're assessing what is the work involved, what do we anticipate that do not exceed cost to be, because again, we don't have a provider yet. Because of the timeline, we're not able to have a provider in place by the finalization of the AGB. But we do want to give applicants certainty. So what we're going to include is a will not exceed amount. So they know that the price will not be higher than that amount, which again, will be informed by the input we've received through the request for information process from vendors that would be carrying out this evaluation. So at the latest by December, that would be included in the AGB. If we have that information earlier, we'll obviously share that with the IRT so that they know that will be included in there.

MARTINA BARBERO

And that means that the consideration of, because the board is considering the document this week, I understand. So they will consider the amounts that are included right now, and then the amount will change afterwards based on information you have.

MARIKA KONINGS

So this is information that's included as, I think, guidance. But we've communicated, because again, this is not, it's not something we're making up as such. This is informed by information that we get from providers. At the end of the day, it will be, the cost will be what is charged, not exceeding that amount that we've estimated. And again, it's in line with the cost recovery nature of the program. So this is not something that the board will look at again, because again, we've explained how we will work through that. So they're approving the language that is there now with the understanding that will be updated some of the other items that are still outstanding before December publication. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Marika, I have Switzerland next.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Nico. Jorge Cancio, Switzerland for the record. So a little bit elaborating on what Martina was mentioning from the European Commission. I just wanted to bring to the attention of the plenary the discussion we had yesterday in the capacity building session, where we had participation of the GeoTLD group. And we had, I



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think, a good exchange with them and also with staff and amongst ourselves. And at least myself, I feel that we should be including some text in the communique in order to state clearly what the position of the GAC is on this matter, building up on the comment we filed in July. So I just wanted to put this on the record that probably we are going to propose this for as communique language.

So that's on the GeoTLD fee. And another question that came to my mind, because it's not very clear, maybe I missed some information, is when the different translations of the AGB will be published. Because we see the formal publication by 30th of December. Is this in all ICANN languages, meaning all UN languages plus Portuguese? Or is it in English? How do we need to understand this? Thank you.

MARIKA KONINGS

Thanks. I put my hand up, but I can put it down. Maybe in response to the first question in relation to the public comment that the GAC provided on the GeoNames review. I mentioned yesterday we're finalizing the overall document and all the comments and all the responses. But maybe it's helpful if we share, because we did review this, obviously, with the IRT, the response that we provided to the GAC comment on this, maybe to the Secretariat. So they can share that with you as you consider this issue further, you at least have the feedback that we provided on the comment. So I'll make sure to relay that. So you have that.

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NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much. Marika, I have... Sorry. Go ahead, Lars.

LARS HOFFMANN

Jorge had a second question, I think, on the translations, just to wrap it up. So we have a policy recommendation on that as well, Jorge, which is that the translations have to be available two months after the AGB is published. The translation team is already working on those translations. We are expecting that to be published earlier than that. So the guidebook will be published in the UN languages. At this moment, there's no plan to publish this in Portuguese or any other language. I will add, though, that while the guidebook will become available in other languages to make it easier for non-English speakers to understand maybe some of the more detailed issues, that the authoritative version is the English version and that the applications for the next round also will have to be made in English. I hope that's helpful.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you very much. Lars, I have Indonesia and then Argentina.

ASHWIN SASTROSUBROTO

Thank you, Nico. Ashwin from Indonesia for the record. My question is still related with the geographic names. You see, when applicants apply for the particular names, and then it will be published in the ICANN website. And if it is related to our geographical names in our country, we can tell the ICANN that it is one of our geographical names. And we may agree or disagree. Now, my question is in

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Indonesia, we have something like 17,000 islands and so on. Now, what happens if after we fail to identify the name applied is one of the names of a small island in Indonesia? And after the ICANN and the applicant made the contract, we then realized it is one of our geographical names, one of the names of our island. And some people complain back at home. What can we do to ICANN? We can only tell ICANN, or how can we ask for that to be canceled, for example? Thank you.

LARS HOFFMANN

So a couple of things. First of all, there's a geographic review by a panel. So every string that is submitted will undergo a geographic review to detect or establish whether or not the string is or can be considered a geographic identifier. And if that comes back as positive, we then will look at whether it's a type of qualifier that requires support from a respective government or other state-wise entity. If that, for example, were to fail, so something were to be overlooked, which hopefully does not happen, or is a qualifier that requires government support, then the application can only move forward with the applicable support from a government or other authority.

The policy recommendations around geographic names has obviously been developed by the community. ICANN is implementing these. We're not making up these recommendations or these rules by ourselves, but this is implementing what the community has developed through the policy development process.

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So the main protection around geographic names is on capital city names and on the names of countries and territories as defined by the respective ISO lists. Names, for example, such as an island, be it Indonesian or anywhere else, the Isle of Man, other types, or maybe a territory, is not specifically protected in the program. So there's a German island, and German is the easiest example for me, Amrum. If somebody were to apply for a string that is spelled that way, A-M-R-U-M, for the translators, then they would be able to apply for that string as long as they don't use it as a geographic identifier, because the combination of those letters could obviously mean something else in a different country. It could be an acronym for a company. It could be something else. So they would be able to move forward. If they were to intend it as a geographic identifier, they would require, so they want to target the population of that island, then they would have to require the support of the respective authorities.

The GAC, as you rightly say, the names will be published along with everybody else. We'll be able to review all the strings that are applied for, the GAC has the opportunity, members and observers, to issue an early warning to identify to applicants that something there is being applied for, whether it's a geographic name or something else that they do not support. They can lay out the rationale and submit that to the applicant to make sure that string, to the extent possible, addresses those concerns. The GAC also then obviously has the opportunity to file or submit consensus advice. That is true at any time during the program. The usual bylaws processes apply here to the next round as well. So the GAC could

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issue advice that this particular name represents a particular region or other identifier that the GAC field should not be delegated because it's not the GAC field should not be delegated because it would be improperly used, and then it would be up to the board to decide whether to accept that advice or not. If this does not happen and a string is delegated and a contract is signed and there was no mistakes during the application process, so somebody applied in this case for this German island name and the region or the German GAC representative were to miss that during the process, nobody else objects through it, there is no policy that prohibits the delegation of a string like this, then I do not think, I'm not a lawyer, but my best understanding here on the spot would be that there would be probably no standing to take against such a string at that moment once a contract has been signed.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much for that, Lars. And we'll be discussing GAC early warnings and everything else in a little while. Thank you so much for that. Indonesia, thank you, Lars. I have the UK, the Netherlands, and then we need to close the queue because we're running out of time. UK, please go ahead.

ESTHER JAROMITSKI

Thank you very much, Nico. It's just a quick question, UK, for the record about the ICANN in your languages program, just to hear a little bit more details on what you're planning in the next months,

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how's that program going, because we used to get a bit more updates on adding any new languages, etc.

CHRISTY BUCKLEY

Thank you for the question. This is Christy Buckley for the record. Excellent question, so, and I'll try to pull up the latest statistics on that, which we try to share with the monthly IRT outreach meetings, but the ICANN in your language is really meant to be an on-demand service, so, for example, if there's a resource currently on the Next Round website or the applicant support program that's not currently available in your language, you can make a request to ICANN in your language to have that translated, and it goes through a machine translation service, which is, I understand from our language services team, about 80% accurate, and then that's published out to a group of volunteers that can help refine and ensure the accuracy of that. We haven't so far, at least the last I checked, seen a lot of uptake of that service, but certainly I expect as we get closer maybe to the round opening and more materials coming out, we could see more interest in using that program. I'll put a link in the chat that provides a bit more information, but we definitely encourage people to use that service. It is available and in large response to the request from the community to have that, so we'd love to see more uptake of that.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much, UK. Thank you, Christy. I have Netherlands and Argentina, and then I'll close the queue. Please go ahead.

MARCO HOGEWONING

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Marco speaking for the record for the Netherlands. Lars, maybe I wonder, you mentioned the ISO list. That's only a very limited set. It might be beneficial to see if the geographic names panel can add other data sources than the ISO list to determine what a geographic name is. Further, it would help if there is a bit more transparency on how the GNP will determine whether a string is a geographic name or not, to remove maybe some of the ambiguity.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you, Marco. As I said in the beginning, this is a community-developed policy, so the protection has been explicitly... Marko thinks this is, as I said in the beginning, this is a community-developed policy, so the protection has been explicitly... Marko thinks this is, as I said in the beginning, this is I would like to start by saying that we have a policy in place that is specifically recommended by the community to encompass capital names and country and territory names as defined in the ISO lists. So we can't, as ICANN, we can't just expand on that policy. It would require additional recommendation that come through the GNSO for that to occur. So we have to be careful about that. And we have to be careful about the fact that the GNSO does not, do not. So there is the protection around the usage of the string. So the panels will look at,

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as I said, whether, for example, these represent secondary cities, other geographic regions, and then determine whether or not the string is intended to be used for the purpose of that geographic identifier. So we have to be careful about that. So we have to be careful about that. And no flag will be raised.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Lars. I have Argentina.

MARINA EIRAS

Thank you, Nico. This is Marina on behalf of Argentina for the record. My question is related to reveal day. So far the only thing that we know about it is that it will take place during April. Right? So I would like to know if you have any information about that.

LARS HOFFMANN

And then can I just respond very quickly? Just to clarify, in April the round will open. It's the opening of the application window. The window will be open for 12 to 15 weeks. So that brings us probably at some point in July, August for the closure of the round, back of the envelope. Those specific dates will be known no later than December this year. And then we will have to decide for what string. And that date is a little bit dependent on, as you can imagine, maybe the amount of applications we receive. We have to reconcile payments, make sure they have come in. We also have to make sure that the relevant checks are made before we can publish the applications. We are currently estimating based on 2,000



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applications that will take us a little bit more than eight weeks. So that will then be the reveal day. If we receive three to make drive that point home, if we receive three applications, I expect the reveal day will happen very quickly after the round closes. Not eight weeks, but maybe eight days. I'm slightly facetious. But I think that you understand what I mean by that. If there's 10,000 applications, then it's likely going to take more than eight weeks.

So we expect to publish some statistics on the amount of applications to the extent that's feasible during the application process. And then inform the community as soon as we can when the reveal day will take place. As I said, it will depend to a significant degree on the amount of applications we'll receive. And then at that moment on reveal day, I also like to just be clear about that. There's a two-week period that follows reveal day. And that's the period where the application is submitted to the replacement team, and during that period, applicants are able to select the replacement string insofar as they have submitted one so they can assess whether somebody else applied for a similar string or the same string and can then decide whether or not they would like to switch the application to the replacement string that they would have to have indicated during the application process. And then the next day on reveal day, the next day on reveal day, the next day on string confirmation day, so that's the day when it will become clear exactly which strings are applied for, whether somebody has switched to a replacement string or not. And only at that moment, the community input period, including the GAC early warning period, will

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commence. So we hope that with giving you a lot of notice as much as we can, we hope that you will be able to understand what's going on and what's going on. And then on string confirmation day is also, if you want, at a time where people can already go through the applications to receive what has been applied for, and then on reveal day, that will happen. But that timetable we expect it to be released at some point after the round closes once we have an understanding of how many applications we have. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Christy Buckley. And I'm going to give three or four minutes to Christy in order to review a little bit of readiness, and then we need to jump in on the early warning process. So Christy, if we can go back to slide number 14, please, Goulton.

CHRISTY BUCKLEY

Thanks very much. This is Christy Buckley for the record. I lead the next round's readiness team. And I'm the director of the GAC policy staff, and I'm here to give a brief overview of helping the GAC be extra ready. We are putting this slide in pretty much every presentation we're giving this week. In the chat, I provided some links to some of the materials here, so you can see those. And I understand from GAC policy staff that the presentation on readiness from yesterday will be posted on the GAC website, so that includes a number of links to ICANN Learn courses, for example. Thank you.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you. And next slide, please, Gulten. So let me give you some background on the by the way, you don't need to stay if you don't want to. You're more than welcome to stay if you want, but thank you so very much, Marika, Lars and Christy. Thank you so much. Greatly appreciate it. Thank you.

So in terms of the procedures and the way the early warning process works, and by the way it's up to us to make any modifications the background is, and we reviewed this in Prague in preparation for this meeting, for the Dublin ICANN 84 meeting, on the next round of new gTLDs and GAC readiness, as we saw before, an important element which needs to be developed by us is a process for the submission of early warnings, a proper process. This is, as you can see on the screen this is a deliverable attached to the GAC and which is needed as soon as feasible, the sooner the better for our own peace of mind to continue preparing the GAC for the next round, specifically about the role of the GAC, and we talked about this yesterday and during the capacity building sessions.

But again, in terms of background, since ICANN 83, that is Prague GAC topic leads and GAC leadership, that is me and the vice chairs, have worked with staff to prepare a draft, and please take into account it is just a draft for GAC membership consideration and input. Again, you're more than welcome to provide any input, any good ideas you might have in that regard. This was shared with all of you, via the mailing list in early October for your review, and

there's been, we already have a lot of input provided by, and thank you very much for that, by the way, directly in the document, and I think we have the link if we can go to the next slide, please, Gulten, thank you so much.

So the draft, as you can see there, the draft process includes an overview of GAC early warnings very general, very, I would say, generic, the timing for submission of an early warning, the process for submitting an early warning, and some GAC member early warning notice to applicants. The draft process for GAC early warnings, you have the link right there, and again, as I said before, your ideas your suggestions edits are more than welcome because we're right in time to develop a proper early warning process. So I'll stop here in order to see if we have ideas, comments, or questions coming from the floor or online, but again, you have the link right there, you can provide your input right there in order to be more efficient. Efficiency is always a good thing, so you don't need to tell me here. You can provide your input right there. And I have a hand from China, please go ahead.

GUO FENG

Thank you, Chair. Guo Feng from China for the record. From the experience of the first round, I think the GAC early warning is a very important tool for GAC members and observers. So now I After reading this document and also some part of the AGB, now I have two points to make. And each point is followed by a question. Maybe we can ask a question later or a question for us. Number one, point

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one, is about the early warning submission period. In the draft AGB now, the GAC early warning submission period previously was within 90 days after the string confirmation date has been extended to 104 days, aligning with the application comment period. However, for certain cases where there are substantial changes to an application during the evaluation period or before the delegation of the top level domain, for example, when certain brand TLD applicants request to change their strings due to string contention issues, or if a applicant submits new registry voluntary commitments, community registration policies, etc. In these cases, ICANN will reopen a 30-day comment period. So in these scenarios, if some members find that such application changes might raise sensitive issues, will there be a further opportunity for GAC members to submit an early warning again? This was first.

Point two is about the effectiveness of our GAC early warning. The draft AGB contains the statement only like this. Evaluator panels may consider early warnings. So with this, I would like to confirm. First one is whether all early warnings submitted on time will be distributed to the respective evaluator panels for their consideration. Second, whether early warning like those comments against a gTLD application can also be taken into account when a formal objection is initiated by an independent objector. So that's my intervention at the time.

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NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much for that, China. The short answer to the first question is, I don't know, but we'll find out. And the same thing for the second. I'm not part of the... I don't have the answer right here, but we can certainly ask and get a written answer, which will be, again, this circulated. Thank you so much. Very important questions indeed. I think we talked about the 90-day period then extended to 104 days and so on yesterday during the capacity building sessions. And they explained that at the beginning, the idea was to have a three-month period in order to make sure that whatever issues there might be. And then they extended. And I asked that question, why 104 days and not 110 or 115? And they explained that the idea was to have two more weeks, and that's why they ended up with 104 days. Thank you again, China. Netherlands?

MARCO HOGEWONING

And particularly to the first question, because I wondered the same when we were drafting this process. And with the help of some staff and Benedetta, feel free to jump in if I say something wrong. But the way I understood it, and we did check with ICANN, is the early warning process starts on string confirmation day, and that is 14 days after reveal day. So you have the 90 days, but that's after all the strings have been confirmed. And that means that process-wise, you do not have to anticipate changes to the strings. Once the early warning process starts, all the applied for strings are fixed. So the only thing that can happen is that an application is withdrawn. It can't be changed as regards to the string. That's how I understood the process. some nodding next to me, and nobody jumping up that

I'm saying something wrong. So that's to answer your first question. As far as reissuing early warnings, I don't think that's in the process at the moment. But of course, the GAC has other instruments to respond to changes.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you, Netherlands, and thank you, China, for the question. The floor is still open. Anybody in the room? UK, please go ahead.

UNITED KINGDOM

Thanks, Nico. Just a quick comment from our side, and UK colleagues have made a couple of comments in this document. Obviously, it's quite apparent that we've had 32 new GAC members during this session. I imagine by the time we get to this point, there'll be quite a significant amount more. So it's just making sure that this document is as instructional, as comprehensive and detailed as possible, because there'll be quite a few new people coming into this. So some of the comments that the UK has put into here is really about being very specific around dates, process times and things like that, but also what can happen in between potential follow-ups and things like that. So just to make that comment.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much, UK, and I wholeheartedly agree with you. Thank you for that. I have Switzerland and then Colombia.

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JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Chair. Jorge Cancio, Switzerland, for the record. I think we already had a conversation on the process itself and the template and how the checks are done. I think it was a webinar. But just for the record, I will repeat it here, because I think there's maybe too much of human checking, and most of it apparently on your shoulders, Nico, which I don't think is very efficient. So I would urge, really, our staff to be very creative on having the process as automated as possible. And this is now rocket science. You can include mandatory fields, so you make sure that there has to be some reference, for instance, to the applicant ID, to other elements, so that the degree or the time spent by our staff and by Nico especially in checking that the template is correct is minimized as much as possible. And I haven't seen that this is the case in... at least in my superficial reading of the document.

Another point which I want to raise here, and I corrected it in the template, is that we agreed, in my understanding with the board, that there might be instances where, out of the mere nature of the string or other circumstances, the applicant cannot address the concerns of the government, because it's just impossible, because it's a name of national importance, and there's no way, shape or form of using that name in a way that is consistent with that national interest or national law. And this was subject to discussion with the board. I think we issued this repeatedly as gag input. And in the Google Doc, we have May address, but in the template, we have Can address. And I think it has to be a May. And I just wanted to raise this



because it's really important. It's not just a detail, because we may end up, I hope, with very few situations like this, but it may happen.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you for that, Switzerland. Well noted. I have Colombia next. And we're running out of time, so please keep it short and sweet.

THIAGO DAL-TOE

Thank you so much, Nico. It's really quick. When are we going to finalize this document? I can see that we have a lot of input from a number of delegates. And I think we may be at the stage to clean up and have a final review be sent to the entire GAC. And we can close that document as soon as possible.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you. And again, I wholeheartedly agree with you. Ideally, during these sessions, I don't know, today, tomorrow, hopefully by Tuesday or Wednesday, but the sooner the better for our own benefit. I totally agree with you. so that's all we have time for. Any final quick comment or remark or question? The floor is still open. And one last chance. I don't see any hand. There we go. So thank you so much. So we're going to have a coffee break, a much-needed coffee break. a 30-minute coffee break, and then, an important thing, the next session is going to be a 90-minute session on DNS abuse. The pre-PDP working session on DNS abuse. But that's going to be in the GNSO meeting room, which I understand is upstairs. I

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don't know exactly where. If you can help me with that, Gulten or Julia or Rob, I think it's on the third floor. Or Rob, can you help me?

ROB HOGGARTH

Nico, it's in Liffey A, one floor up.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Thank you so much for that, Rob. so the session is adjourned. Enjoy your coffee, and I'll see you upstairs in 30 minutes. Thank you. And we'll see you all back here in this room after lunch. Thank you. Recording stopped.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**