ICANN87 Bali | AGM – GAC Capacity Development (2 of 2) GAC readiness for Next Round
Saturday, October 17, 2026 – 13:15 to 14:30 WITA

JULIA CHARVOLEN

Welcome to the second ICANN87 GAC Capacity Development Session on Saturday, 17 October at 13:15 local time. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Stands for Behavior, ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

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

CHRISTINE ARIDA

Thank you very much, Julia, and hello everyone again. I hope you had a good lunch. So this is the second session of Capacity Development and in this session we will be focusing on the GAC readiness for the 2026 Round. So we will be looking more into,

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

listening more on community input and processes from the new round team and then we will review the GAC readiness material as presented by our GAC support team.

Then we will have time for a bit of a discussion and takeaways, which Marco will be leading. So I encourage you to bring in the questions that were coming from the previous session. Many were put forward and were to be discussed in this session, so please let's make it an interactive session. With that, I will turn to Elisa. Elisa, the floor is yours.

ELISA BUSETTO

Thank you so much. I'm Elisa and I'm serving as the stage lead for all things related to community input. Before we start, once again, as Marco already mentioned in the previous session, please note that the new gTLD programme 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook is the authoritative source of all information and here in these slides we actually try to simplify quite complex concepts coming from the guidebook. Nest slide, please.

Today I'll be presenting together with Eduardo and George, who we already met in the previous session. Next Slide. So this session has the objective of understanding the actions that GAC members and observers individually or collectively as the GAC can take on new gTLD applications and we will be talking about application comments, which can be submitted by anybody, singular or plural notifications, GAC member Early Warnings that can be submitted by members and observers of the GAC, objections, which can be

submitted by parties with sending, and finally, GAC consensus advice. And next slide, please.

So the first way the community has to provide input on applications is by submitting application comments. Next slide, please. Anybody, which includes GAC members and observers, of course, can submit application comments with the objective to bring issues to the attention of ICANN applicants and evaluators. There is a specific tool that we have developed, and Eduardo will speak more about it, which is called the application comment forum. Anybody can submit comments, but they will have to have an account.

Comments can be submitted at any time following string confirmation day, which, as we mentioned earlier, is expected to happen on the 17th of November. But they will be considered by evaluators only during specific time periods, which in the 104 days following string confirmation day, which means between the 17th of November and the 16th of March next year, and for 30 days following brand string change requests or certain application change requests, which warrant an application comment period.

It should be noted that application comments do not have a direct impact on applications, but they may be considered by evaluators. And then I will hand it over to Eduardo, who will talk about the application comment forum. Eduardo?

EDUARDO ALVAREZ

Thank you, Elisa. So the application comment forum, or ACF for short, that's going to be our platform for reviewing and receiving comments from the public. It will be launched on String Confirmation Day, as Elisa just said, which is currently scheduled for 17th of November next month. It's intended for anyone from the general public, businesses, or any other stakeholders in the community, for them to review any received comments or submit new ones.

Those comments received in the community input period or any other period that's open for public comments will be shared with evaluators and applicants through the ACF, just for the general awareness. Even though the comment forum will remain open, even when there are no such periods, so that the public can continue to review any received comments otherwise. Next slide, please.

So the homepage of the ACF, it's going to have basically a big list of all of the comments that we've received with the general information about the commenter, the related application, and the area that the comment relates to. So if we look at the slide on screen, on top we're going to have navigation links that tie in the comment forum with the APS, which is our application, publications, and statistics system that we talked about in our previous session, and also the new gTLD program website.

There's also a help page that's going to be there to help users get familiar with this system and how to use it and navigate it. And

then the main list that is going to be publicly available will be searchable by dates, the corresponding application or applicant, string, or comment area, to make it easier to filter or search specific comments. Next slide, please.

We did say that the ACF is open to everyone, but it will require anyone who intends to submit a comment to actually have an ICANN account. That will allow the commenters to provide information about themselves, including whether they have any affiliation with the ICANN community or any relationship with applicants, any of the required fields that are defined in the Applicant Guidebook that will need to be provided in order to be able to actually submit a comment.

In order to submit a comment after logging into your ICANN account, then you will be able to indicate which application the comment pertains to, starting with the apply for string or variant, and then if there's more than one applicant going for that same string, they will also have to select which applicant is being considered. We have some echo in the room. Okay, it looks like it's fixed. Apologies. Is it testing? All right, I think it's fixed. Apologies for that.

So, as I was saying, a commenter will have to select their string and the applicant that the application belongs to, then they can select what area it pertains to, which can be any of the evaluations that will be performed during the program, from string similarity to background screening, any other evaluation. Those are the

selectable options, and then they can start drafting their comment. It also allows to submit optionally up to two attachment files in case it's necessary, and commenters will also have the ability to indicate if their comment pertains to confidential portions of the application or that they believe that shouldn't be posted publicly.

That can also be indicated, and it will go for ICANN for review first as describing the Applicant Guidebook. But ideally, or in general, all publics are meant for the public forum. Once the applicant fills all of this form, then they will be able to see their comment posted right then and there.

One thing to consider, as I was mentioning earlier, only those comments received during the community input periods or special comment periods will be shared with evaluators and the applicant for responding. So, it's something that commenters will have to be mindful of to make sure that they are aware of those timelines to receive those comments in order for those to be considered in the corresponding evaluations. Thank you. Next slide, and I'm going to be handed over to the next speaker.

CHRISTINE ARIDA I think there is a comment in the chat that you might want to take note of, and I have a question. Do you also have to have to log in with your ICANN account to see the comments, or are they public?

EDUARDO ALVAREZ: If we go back two slides, please, the main page with the list of comments, that's going to be publicly available for everybody. No need to have an ICANN account, no need to log in, but you will only be able to view or search comments. If you do intend to post a comment, you will be redirected to start and log in to start a session with your ICANN account. I did see a comment in the chat about clarifying, is anyone with an ICANN account? Yes, we can certainly make that clarification, and anyone can create a new ICANN account. They're free. They're pretty easy to get. So it's just to identify who's the commenter.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Okay, and I think we have a question from the floor. Thiago, please.

THIAGO DAL-TOE: Thank you so much, Cristina. Thiago Dal-Toe from Colombia. Eduardo, I wanted to ask a question. The comments, as soon as you press send, two questions. Can you edit afterwards in case you made a mistake on something related to your comment, and if the comments will have some sort of moderation before they're posted? Thank you.

EDUARDO ALVAREZ: Thank you. No, once posted, the comments cannot be edited. So yes, I do encourage commenters to review before posting. We cannot have people changing what they've already posted after the

fact, so that's not something we're supporting at this point, and I'll let my colleague Elisa talk about the moderation.

ELISA BUSETTO

Yeah, thanks, Eduardo. The forum is not moderated, and there is no approve button for a comment to be posted. The only case in which we would review the comments before they move forward is in the case of confidential comments. In that case, ICANN would make a verification as to whether the confidential comment actually refers to the confidential portion of the application, and if it does, it will be posted confidentially, meaning that it will only be available to certain parties, whereas if it is not considered to be confidential, we will send a notification to the commenter saying that the comment should be posted publicly instead. I hope that answers the question.

CHRISTINE ARIDA

Thank you. Do we have any other questions before we proceed? Okay, I see none. Let's continue.

GEORGE SARKISYAN

Hi, everyone. George Sarkisyan. So we want to ensure everyone has an understanding of the actions the GAC members and observers individually or collectively can take on new gTLD applications. So with that, we'll go through each briefly and encourage questions as we go, the first one being singular plural

notifications. So the submitters, of course, anyone can submit or file a singular plural notification the website is now up.

The form is also available for download to fill out and to submit to ICANN. The form will help to identify if any of the applied-for strings are a singular or plural form of another applied-for string, in which case it could potentially lead to being placed in contention, or if it's a singular plural of an existing gTLD string being processed from a previous round or of a blocked name, and if validated, could potentially lead to that application not being able to proceed.

As I mentioned, there's a form and the form is now available on the new gTLD program website, the singular plural website's up, which can be used by the filers to fill out and submit to ICANN. And I think we mentioned in the previous slide, different from the other -- Thank you, apologies. And so the singular plural notification window is the 30 days following the string confirmation day. And I briefly mentioned the outcomes as well.

So based on the validated singular -- Actually, based on the submission, that will lead to the evaluation taking place. And based on the evaluation, and depending if it's validated, it's a legitimate notification, which could potentially lead to either an application being placed in contention or unable to proceed. I think we can go to the next slide.

Here you get to see an example of the form. We just have two of the pages. There's a lot of information to help the filers to make sure they file a more complete singular plural notification submission to

ICANN. We've got some of the links to the website. There are several FAQs related to the singular plural notification submission. As well as the evaluation that will take place afterwards. The submission has specific FAQs for it, and those will be found on the community input FAQ related sections.

And then for the evaluation portion, those will be found on the string evaluations section of the FAQ page. And of course, the reference to the Applicant Guidebook, section 4.4, goes more details into the singular plural notification submission and the evaluation, as well as the challenge portion relating to it. I think with that we can pause if there are any questions or move on to the next slide. Okay.

THIAGO DAL-TOE Thank you so much. Apologies for coming back on another issue, and I think maybe Elisa can respond to this. Understanding that there's not going to be any moderation on the comments, and given that we have to have a registered account, there's nothing prohibited from someone registering an account on Jane Doe, for example. So, will there be any review of these type of activities once this is live?

ELISA BUSETTO Yeah, thanks, Thiago. This is actually something we have thought about. In case anybody sees a comment that's in violation of the terms of service, they can flag it to global support, and then we will

review that. So, there is a chance for the public to flag any content. And I believe that they would also have to agree to comply with ICANN's terms of service before commenting. But we do not have the capacity to review each and every comment as they come in, of course.

THIAGO DAL-TOE Thank you so much for the answer. Okay. Will each comment have some sort of flag this for inappropriate comment, or we would have to send an email to? Okay, I'll flag. Thank you. Appreciate it.

CHRISTINE ARIDA I think there is another question. Ashwin, would you like to?

ASHWIN SASONGKO Thank you. I have two small questions in the chat. One is that during the previous round, the previous round, of gTLD, some objections were sent in official letters. Indonesia also sent a letter that time to ICANN. Today, we can still do the same thing, using official letters, number one. The second question is another one. If somehow we are late to send objections, and for many reasons, what will happen? Can we still submit objections later? Or no, you cannot submit objections because you are late? Thank you.

ELISA BUSETTO Thank you for your question. The objections process is actually quite specific one, and we will go through some slides later today.

For that, I do not believe that late submissions can be accepted, because there's a fairly strict timeline, and this is also managed by external providers.

However, national governments or GAC members and observers have the chance to submit GAC Members' Early Warnings, and the guidebook says that GAC Members' Early Warnings should be submitted in the 104 days following string confirmation date, but I think that although we highly encourage GAC members and observers to respect this timeline, I believe that there can be some flexibility in that regard.

But I think that if we go through the next slides, we'll probably get some more clarity around that, and especially about the difference between GAC member Early Warnings and objections. Here we are with GAC member Early Warnings, and unless there are any other questions, I think I can start talking about this. Next slide, please.

GAC Member Early Warnings can be submitted individually or collectively by GAC members and observers, and they are an early indication that an application is potentially problematic. There is a specific form, and we will take a look in the next slide, and they must include a written explanation describing why the Early Warning was submitted, and if possible, how the applicant may address the concern.

GAC members should also provide contact details for communication with the applicant. There is a specific form that we will take a look at, and the time frame for submitting Early

Warnings is in the 104 days following string confirmation date, but once again, the language in the guidebook says should.

There is no GAC Member Early Warnings do not have a direct impact on an application, but signals that it could become later subject to GAC consensus advice. So we always encourage applicants to take GAC Member Early Warnings seriously because of the potential consequences, and here in the slide, which I think ARO will be posting soon, there's also a link to the GAC Early Warnings from the 2012 round you can take a look at.

Next slide, please. Here's the form that I think is now published on the GAC website, and GAC member Early Warnings will be posted on a Dedicated wiki page, which is already online, but it's, of course, still empty, and they can be submitted to the GAC team by sending an email to 26r-gac-earlywarnings@icann.org, as you can see here.

And the GAC policy support team, I believe they can provide additional information as they are the ones managing the process. Applicants will be notified of Early Warnings affecting their application via the TLD Application Management System, or TAMS, as soon as feasible after the Early Warning is issued. So, just again, to answer your question, this is a way a government can raise concerns about an application. And are there any questions around GAC member Early Warnings?

CHRISTINE ARIDA And I think in the chat, there is a link to the form if you want to check it out as well. Are there any questions? I think there are no questions. Oh, there is one. Please, and kindly all introduce yourself when you take the mic. Thank you.

PAUL BLAKER Thank you. Paul Blaker for the UK. With the GAC Member Early Warnings, is there a mechanism for them to be completed? So if a government makes an Early Warning, and then the applicant addresses all the concerns, does that Early Warning just continue, or is there a point at which it ends, and what's the process for that? Thank you.

ELISA BUSETTO Yeah, thank you, Paul. So the Early Warning will stay online. We are not planning to take it offline. But because it does not really have a direct impact on applications, we don't really put an end to the Early Warning, so to say. And there will also be a flag on TAMS, on the Application Management System, and there's no plan to remove the flag if the Early Warning is addressed, also because there's no formal process for closing an Early Warning process. So I don't think so.

And maybe to the earlier question, there is still the option to send a letter to ICANN about specific applications, but this is not specifically covered in the applicant guidebook. So the option of

sending correspondence to ICANN is still possible, of course. And Marco, please.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Okay, we have a question from Marco.

MARCO HOWEWONING Not so much a question, but to the UK's comment, repeat that in the next session. We've got another session coming up on which we will be discussing readiness materials, because it's an interesting afterthought, but maybe defer back to the GAC discussion later this week.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Okay. Paul, is this an old hand, or do you want to come back in? Okay, I have another hand from Santosh. Where he is?

T. SANTHOSH Over here. Okay, go ahead. Thank you, Christine. I'm Santosh, alternate GAC representative from India. So regarding GAC Member Early Warning form, for the information of the colleagues over here, which are the different mechanism of the new gTLD program by which each GAC member can make an Early Warning, can you specify the different mechanism? Thank you.

ELISA BUSETTO

So you're asking what the mechanisms are for submitting an Early Warning. So again, this process is managed by the GAC team. So if you guys want to jump in, please feel free. But the idea is that they would have to fill out this form, which is here. Either one or more GAC members and observers, and submit it to this email address that's now on screen.

And there would be, of course, a completeness check. They would then send it over to us, and they would also publish it on a wiki page. So the Early Warnings are actually public and can be seen by anybody without the need to log in. And then we would, so our program team would send a notification to the affected applicant or applicants, so that they can also take a look.

And the contact information would be removed from the public version, whereas in the version that we would send to applicants, we would also include the contact information so that applicants can reach out to the GAC members or observers that have issued the Early Warning if they wish to do so.

CHRISTINE ARIDA

So I see a comment in the chat from Marika. Not to put you on the spot, but I think this was in response to Indonesia's question, if I recall right. Would you like to?

MARIKA KONINGS

Yeah, thanks. Hi, this is Marika. There was a question on whether, which I understood to be the correspondence process, that could

be used for submitting formal objections. And I just responded, although, and I think Elisa mentioned as well, the correspondence process is always available for anyone who wants to write to ICANN with any questions or comments they have.

But if you want to file a formal objection, or a GAC Early Warning, or any of the other mechanisms that are available, you will need to go through the processes that are being outlined here in accordance as well with the timelines that have been set out. So I hope that helps.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Okay, thank you very much. I think we have another question from Jorge.

JORGE CANCIO I'm here, Jorge Cancio of Switzerland, for the record. So I was just wondering right now whether we have, maybe Benedette, I don't know, I don't want to put you on the spot, but maybe you know. If, for instance, we as a country are considering the possibility of issuing an Early Warning, but there is information that pertains to the application that is unclear to us, is there any preliminary way of contacting the applicant informally through the contact form, or to request, for instance, some information?

Or in the other session we were discussing the fact that the non-objection letter from the corresponding governmental authority when we are talking about GeoNames will not be published, which

was a little bit surprising. If we would like to ask the applicant for that information and still are undecided on whether to issue a GAC Early Warning, is there any specific procedure to do that, or is it just you find, you have to find the contact information of the applicant and see whether they respond or not?

So I guess we will have these kinds of cases more often where a country might consider an Early Warning but wants to request more information from the applicant first.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Thank you, Jorge. Benedette, then Jorge.

BENEDETTE ROSSI Thank you, Jorge. It was just a note that no, we don't have a specific process for this, and the contact information of the applicants will not be public. But I mean, you can include any questions or clarifications that are needed in the Early Warnings themselves, though. So if something is unclear, that can be part of the dialogue with the applicant once you submitted the Early Warning.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Do you want to follow up, Jorge?

JORGE CANCIO Maybe a two-finger, Jorge Cancio, again for the record. Because I can well imagine that sometimes this might be confidential or

sensitive. So maybe it's something for us, and I'm looking at Marco as a shepherd of this session, and Christine, maybe something for us to discuss internally in the GAC, because I can well imagine that we have these cases where we need more information, but we want to have a secure and confidential communication channel with the applicant.

And we want to avoid going public with just questions that maybe can be solved bilaterally, because otherwise, both for a country and the applicant, maybe an Early Warning which is public might be too big of an instrument, like killing sparrows with cannons or something like that.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Yeah, that makes sense. Do you want to come in, Marco?

MARCO HOWEWONING Yeah, the careful observer for this session noted that I am slotted here for GAC takeaways, so I am taking notes. We'll come back to that in the next session. Thank you, Go ahead.

CHRISTINE ARIDA So I have maybe a question. So the applicant will be notified of the Early Warning. And you mentioned there is no way to respond or maybe figure out that there is a response somehow, maybe?

ELISA BUSETTO

So once the applicant is in the notification to the applicant, we will also include the contact details of the submitters, meaning that the applicant may elect to reach out, but they are not forced to. So it is where they're highly encouraged to do it, because of course we always mention how seriously Early Warning should be taken, considering that there might be advice if nothing changes. We cannot control what applicants do, and it will be up to them to decide what to do with that information.

CHRISTINE ARIDA

Okay, anyone wants to comment on that? No? Okay, let's maybe move on.

ELISA BUSETTO

Now we're going to talk about objections and appeals. And we received a few questions in the earlier session, and I will try to answer as we go through the slides. But please feel free to chime in if I forget something.

So another way that GAC members and observers, but also the public, can provide input on applications is by finding objections. It should be noted that in order to submit an objection, a party needs to have standing, and standing is clearly defined in the Applicant Guidebook. Standing basically defines which kind of requirements one needs to meet in order to be able to file a specific objection.

And it should be noted that GAC members and observers may have standing, but this, once again, is defined in the Applicant Guidebook. Independent objectors can also file objections, and we will talk about them more in detail in a slide. So there are four grounds that there are four objection grounds, which are extreme confusion, legal rights, limited public interest, and community. And I will provide more detail later.

And they are objections are not submitted to ICANN, but they are submitted to dispute resolution service providers. And dispute resolution service providers, also called DRSPs, have published their own procedures on their websites. And on their website, you can also find more information about fees, but I will talk about it a bit more in detail.

So objections may be submitted in the 104 days for all objection grounds following the announcement on String Confirmation day. So this is between the 17th of November this year and the 16th of March next year. And then for 30 days for String Confusion Only, following the publication of the String Evaluation Reports. And for 30 days for all objection grounds in case of brand string changes.

So objections may have a big impact on applications because a panel, which is appointed by the DRSP, will determine whether the application can proceed can proceed if certain modifications are made or cannot proceed at all. Unlike in the last round, this time the panel determination can be appealed. So we have an appeal process in place. And next slide, please.

So here we describe more in detail the different objection grounds. So String Confusion is for cases in which they apply for primary string. It's a locatable variant label or it's blocked variant label, which sounds which is a mouthful. It's confusingly similar visually, orally, or in meaning to another TLD, another applied for primary string, and or any of its allocatable or blocked variants. So in practice, the String Confusion Ground covers cases of confusing similarity. It differs from string similarity evaluation, which George briefly touched on in the previous session, because it does not doesn't only cover visual similarity, but also similarity in pronunciation and in meaning.

So the panel, we actually expand on the definition of similarity compared to the panel that looks that perform industry similarity evaluation. Only specific parties have standing to file String Confusion Objections, and these are existing gTLD operator for the specific strings, of course, an existing ccTLD operator of a significant eastern interested party, and an application an applicant in this application round.

Another ground is legal rights, which is for cases in which an applied for string and or more applied for allocatable variant strings infringes on its existing legal rights. And in this case, legal rights objections can be filed by a rights holder or IGO meeting the criteria for registration of a .INT domain name. And these two objection grounds are administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization or WIPO, whereas limited public interest and community objections are administered by ICC, which is the

International Chamber of Commerce. Limited public interest objections, unlike string confusion and legal rights objections, can be filed by anybody.

So there is no precise standing as part of this objection ground. And the claim is that the applied for string or and one more applied for allocatable variant strings are considered to be contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order recognized under principle of international law.

And finally, community objections can be filed by established institutions associated with clearly delineated communities based on a claim that there is well-substantiated opposition to an applied for string from a significant portion of the community which the string may be explicitly or implicitly targeting. So here we try to stay to be quite high level, but I would invite you to refer to the guidebook for more information on what the panel will actually be looking at for each objection ground.

And next slide, please. I see there's a few questions in the chat, but if that's okay, I will look at them after the end of this section. So I would like to stress that there are no differentiated fees for specific governments, but national governments may decide to request funding from ICANN to fund one objection and one appeal, but there are certain conditions that have to be met.

So the national government will have to submit a form and send it to ICANN at a dedicated email address within specific timelines. ICANN will perform necessary due diligence and inform the

national government of the result, and we would like to stress that ICANN only covers the DRSP filing fees and costs.

So, for instance, if the national government incurs additional legal fees or similar, those will not be covered by ICANN. It should also be noted that ICANN will make payments directly to the DRSPs and not make any refunds to the national governments. In case the national government decides to pay first and ask for a refund, this is not possible. And we would really like to invite you to check the webpage that's published here for detailed instructions, and you can also find a downloadable form that needs to be filled out to request for funding for objections and appeals. And once again, costs are only covered for one objection and one appeal for each national government.

And next slide, please. Finally, we would also like to provide some information on independent objectors, who are free individuals selected by ICANN, who are not acting on behalf of any particular person or entities, but solely in the best interest of the public. Independent objectors may only file Limited Public Interest and Community objections, and they must consider application comments and will not object to an application unless at least one comment opposing the application has been made.

They will only file objections in the 111 days following String Confirmation Day, so you might notice that they have an additional week compared to other parties. And they may also decide to appeal panel determinations if they do not prevail. Independent

objectors will not have their objection considered if another objection on the same ground has passed a quick look review absent extraordinary circumstances.

So the idea is that these three individuals whom we are in the process of finalizing the selection, so there will be an announcement soon, will be looking at applications and see if there are certain strings that they do not believe are in line with the public interest and no objections were filed against those strings. So they will sort of fill the gaps and file community or limited public interest objections. And then I think I will now try to address some of the questions that we received earlier.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Yes, and we also have a hand up in the Zoom, I think it's Netherlands.

MARCO HOWEWONING Thank you, Elisa. It's Marco from Netherlands speaking. Just out of sheer interest, looking back and what you determined were significantly interested party. I hear a new acronym coming up. But who is to determine who that is? And kind of more broadly in terms of standing, will this just be part of the objection evaluation to determine whether you are a significantly interested party and or whether you have standing? How is that evaluation taking place?

ELISA BUSETTO Yeah, this was my fault. I have just posted the definition of significantly interested parties in the chat and it is also included in the guidebook. So there is a quite specific definition. We can also read it out loud, but it's government or territorial authorities for the counter territory associated with the ccLTD, individuals, organization, companies, et cetera. So yeah, please refer to that. I hope this answers your question. And I see a hand from Nigel.

CHRISTINE ARIDA We have a hand from CTU.

NIGEL CASSIMIRE Thank you very much, Christine. Nigel Cassimire from CTU. I'm not clear in terms of these independent objectives. Your first bullet says, standing panel of three individuals or entities selected by ICANN, not acting, blah, blah, blah, blah. So an individual cannot be an individual objector? Is it that we need three persons? Sorry, I'm not following what that means.

ELISA BUSETTO Yeah, thank you. I will try and clarify it. So we have selected three individuals who will be operating independently. Each of them will review all the applications and they will decide individually whether to file an objection against a specific application or not. There will be a chair whose job will not be to prevent a specific objection from being filed, for instance.

But it will simply be to avoid situations in which two objections are filed against the same string, among other tasks. But we want to avoid having two objections filed by the independent objectors because, of course, there are costs associated. And this is ICANN's money. So we're trying to avoid this scenario. But there doesn't have to be consensus among the independent objectors for them to be able to file an objection.

Something else is that, as mentioned here on this slide, independent objectors should not file objections if there's already an objection filed against a specific string. But in extraordinary circumstances, they might decide to go ahead. And this is the only scenario in which there would have to be consensus.

We have discussed more details around how independent objectors are going to operate with the implementation review team while we were discussing the overall implementation of the program. And we will also post more information on this on the new gTLD program website soon. So I hope that more of your questions will be answered.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Okay, and we have a queue. First India, and then the USA, and then Switzerland. So India, please, the floor is yours.

T. SANTHOSH Thank you, Catherine. So coming to the slide number 20, which mentions about the funding to file objections and appeal, the slide

previous to this, which is slide number 20. Which says national governments may request funding from ICANN to fund one objection and one appeal, subject to certain conditions. Is it a requirement to make a request for funding from ICANN? A clarification is required. Thank you.

ELISA BUSETTO No, it is not a requirement. Any national government or government members or observers may file as many objections as they wish, and there are no requirements for that. The only requirement is if they wish to have their objection or appeal funded, then they will have to follow a specific process. But they don't have to request money from ICANN.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Thank you. The US, please.

SUSAN CHALMERS Thank you. Could you clarify how filing fees for objections are calculated by dispute resolution providers? Namely, how the decision should charge either a fixed fee or an hours-based fee is determined? We ask because we support making this process as transparent and fair as possible. Thank you.

ELISA BUSETTO Thank you for that clarification. For your question, and I have posted here in the chat the links to the webpages where the DRSPs

describe their fee schedule. You will see that for each objection round. So you will see that WIPO has mostly a flat fee schedule, whereas ICC will determine what the advanced cost will be once the panel has been appointed.

So the DRSPs will actually send invoices to both parties requesting to file the advanced cost at specific points in time. You will also see that there is a filing fee, which is also defined in the links that I just posted to the chat, which is mostly non-refundable. And then there's a second moment in time, the parties will be requested to pay advanced costs.

And finally, there might be a final invoice based on the actual cost. So there are two different approaches to this. WIPO has a flat fee, whereas ICC has an hourly fee. And then based on the specific situation, the fees might vary. So I hope this answers your question.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Okay, and there is a final question, maybe from Switzerland, and then we can move on after Switzerland.

BENJAMIN HARBICH Hello, Benjamin speaking for Switzerland. I want to jump back to the question of Marco, where an objector might be, or the comment of an objector might be excluded, not for the content, but the objector himself. And this applies also for the slide before on the community objecting, where the definition of who can object are,

in my opinion, a bit vague. And how that's going to be judged, and I think you didn't respond to Marco's question in that point, where you posted the definition, but not how this will be judged. Thank you.

ELISA BUSETTO

Yeah, apologies for that. So there is a specific procedure as part of the objection and appeal processes, which is called Quick Look Review. So the panel will be appointed right after the administrative review performed by the RSPs, and this panel will perform a substantive assessment on the objection itself, as well as on the standing.

So the panel, the standing requirements are quite clearly defined in the applicant guidebook, and as I understand, the slide is quite vague, but we couldn't go too much into the detail. I can also post a link to the specific section, and the panel appointed will actually check whether requirements are met. So there is a substantive check on this, as well. And how that is performed, of course, depends on what we have, on the definition of standing that we have in the applicant guidebook.

CHRISTINE ARIDA

Susan, is that a follow-up hand, or an old? An old, okay. So okay, let's move on in the interest of time, please.

ELISA BUSETTO

Finally, the last, but not least, is GAC Consensus Advice, which, as you know, can be submitted by the GAC to the Board via Consensus, and provides advice to the ICANN Board, including related to applications that which are seen as sensitive or may violate national law. I would like to stress that GAC advice about new gTLD applications must clearly state that it is GAC advice, include an articulated rationale, it should be limited to the scope set out in the applicable bylaws provision, and elaborate on any interaction between ICANN's policies and various laws, et cetera.

So, of course, it's submitted by GAC Communiqué, and there is no specific time frame for GAC advice to be issued, so it can be submitted at any time, and the ICANN Board will consider it in accordance to its bylaws, of course. As mentioned previously, GAC members and observers may also submit Early Warnings, giving a heads up to applicants before GAC advice is issued. And I see Jorge's hand is up.

CHRISTINE ARIDA

Yes, there's a hand from Switzerland.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Christine. Just struck my eye to see that the system tool is defined as GAC Communiqué. To my knowledge, GAC Consensus Advice may be delivered by a letter, by any other piece, so it's not bound to the GAC Communiqué. It's just that the GAC Communiqué is the usual means of providing GAC Consensus

Advice. That's at least my understanding of the bylaws and the operating principles.

ELISA BUSETTO Yeah, thanks, Jorge. This was an over-sized hour, and thanks.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Yes, thank you. And also, Bernadette has mentioned that in the chat. Any questions before we move on? Okay, there is a question from Maaike.

MAAIKE VEENSTRA Thank you. Over here. I have a short question about the GAC Consensus Advice. Are there any examples from the last round in 2012 from successful GAC Consensus Advice, and if so, where could we find these examples?

ELISA BUSETTO I think I cannot see now here. Yes. But there are links in the slides. So several Communiqués were published, starting from ICANN46, which is Beijing, to ICANN54, Dublin. So I think once the slides are posted, you can take a look at the advice about applications in the 2012 round.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Okay, I think we need to move on, if you'd like, very briefly and quickly to go on with the poll, because we have very limited time.

GEORGE SARKISYAN

Yes, let's quickly go through them. As I read the question, please feel free to already start casting your votes. So can GAC observers submit GAC Member Early Warnings? A, only if they have the support of a GAC member. B, no. C, yes. And D, only if the GAC reaches consensus. Maybe we'll just take 10, 15 seconds. We have a few more coming, so maybe in the interest of time, yes. C, they can submit a GAC Member Early Warning. Maybe we can move on to the next one. There's a few more, so you'll have opportunities.

So can GAC Consensus Advice have an impact on an application? Yes. If accepted by the board as per ICANN's bylaws. B, no. But evaluators may take GAC Consensus Advice into account when performing their evaluations. C, only if issued during this ICANN meeting. Or D, only if issued in Adelaide between 30th October and 4th of November, 2027. And yes, we are looking good. It is a yes, if accepted by the board as per ICANN's bylaws. So, we'll just go through these quickly.

The third one, can GAC members and observers submit application comments now? A, yes, via the ACF. B, no, they can only submit comments starting on String Confirmation Day. C, yes, by emailing the GAC chair with Lars in copy. He's back there. Or D, no, only other applicants can submit application comments. Mixed results for this one. But it is B, they can only submit comments starting on String Confirmation Day when the application comment, the community input portion will also be open.

And one more. How can national governments apply for funding to file objections and appeals? I feel like we've discussed this a little bit. A, by sending a registered letter to ICANN's office. B, by paying for the fees first and then requesting a refund from ICANN. C, by waiting until after the deadline for filing objections and then emailing Elisa, sorry, or D, by strictly following the procedures published on the new gTLD program's website. And you guys are doing really well. It is D, following the procedures on the new gTLD website, certainly. Thanks, everybody.

CHRISTINE ARIDA So thank you very much with that. To the next round team. And I'd like to give them a round of applause if possible. Okay. And we'll move right away to Benedette. Please, Benedette, floor is yours.

BENEDETTE ROSSI Thank you, Christine. So my name is Benedette Rossi, the GAC support staff, for those who don't know me. So I'll just spend a couple of minutes introducing the GAC's operational readiness approach. Which has been put into place to support members and observers as the application review process progresses. And then showing you how the different materials fit together. Oh, yeah, we're already on the next slide.

So you've just heard from the next round team the different mechanisms and what opportunities are available to GAC members and observers during the application process. But now what we're

looking at here, and we'll explore further in the next plenary session, is how the GAC has actually prepared operationally to support engagement with the mechanisms that were reviewed in practice.

So basically, it's about making sure that you know what support is available, when different types of GAC engagement may become relevant, and then how the pieces fit together. As the next round progresses. So as the round moves into application review and community input, members may choose to engage at different points. Sometimes, as was mentioned before, individually, through their own national or internal processes, and sometimes through the broader GAC discussions.

And the purpose of the operational readiness framework, which was developed, supported by the new gTLD topic leads, and the GAC leadership team, has been to make sure that there's a clear and predictable structure in place, and that practical materials are available when members need them. So this work has resulted in an overarching operational readiness framework, supporting materials for GAC Member Early Warnings, and then an operational approach for the consideration of possible GAC advice.

These materials only support the existing mechanisms. They do not create any new procedures or change the applicable rules. And this is particularly important for GAC advice. But we'll look at the documents more thoroughly in the plenary sessions. But if you go

to the next slide, you'll just see how the documents actually fit together visually. Thank you.

So yeah, here you can see that at the top, there's the operational readiness framework, which is the overarching document, providing the common structure for GAC review and engagement as the application progress progresses. Underneath, you have the two different paths. So the Early Warning pathway on the left, and then on the right, the GAC Advice pathway. They're distinct here in the slide. But I mean, technically, you can link it, meaning that you're able to submit an Early Warning and then advice as well, if you wish. But there are also two distinct processes. You can also just submit GAC advice.

So I won't repeat what was already mentioned about the Early Warning mechanisms. But the purpose of the two documents that were developed were just to make the operational processes clear and workable for members and observers who decide to use these mechanisms. So yeah, especially for GAC Advice, what I was saying is that it does not create any new mechanisms.

It doesn't change the way that GAC Advice works. It was just a practical reason for approaching this was because we're expecting potentially a large number of applications to be reviewed. There may be several applications or strings that members wish to explore. So you decided to operationalize this to make it as smooth as possible, rather than only discussing this during face-to-face

communique sessions, for example. I think we can move to the next slide.

And here you can see more of a phased approach, which, again, we'll look at this even more thoroughly in the next session. But this is just the phased approach that is set out in the framework. The phases here really show how GAC engagement is relevant at every stage. So right now we're in phase one, so running from reveal day to String Confirmation Day. So yeah here we're falling within the replacement period, so it's considered an initial or preliminary review stage at this time. And then the final apply for strings, as our colleagues mentioned, will be confirmed on the 17th of November.

And then that's when phase two starts. At that point, you can all review into a more detailed review of the confirmation applications and strings. And that is an important date as well, since it opens the 104-day community input period. So that's when you can start submitting GAC Member Early Warnings and objections, et cetera. You've already heard about this, so I won't repeat it.

And then phase three is this sort of new opportunity that was developed as part of the framework, which are voluntary opportunities for members to exchange information, raise potential public policy concerns, and share perspective. But they're not intended as any decision-making processes or sessions. And participation doesn't affect the ability of an individual member or observer to use any of the available mechanisms.

And then phase four reflects the possible courses of action as the review progresses. So you have no further action, GAC Early Warning, further discussion with a view for possible advice, or no action at all. And just one point I think is important is that this isn't intended to be a rigid or mandatory sequence. It's just a way to potentially organize the work, since different activities can overlap. Members still retain discretion over whether and how they engage with the mechanisms available to them.

So I think that's all I had. We'll be reviewing this further in the next session. So I'll just turn it back, I think, to Christine.

CHRISTINE ARIDA

Okay. Thank you very much, Benedette. And thank you to the support team, I think. And we have five minutes left. So I will give Marco the floor to just give the takeaways and wrap up the discussion.

MARCO HOWEWONING

Yeah, and for the sake of time, now I'm in the privileged position to just share my notes with you. I don't think there's a lot of time to further discuss this. But we'll come back. There's plenty of more sessions to come. The key takeaways I noted down, and thank you, Christina, and everybody else in the Capacity Development Working Group for setting us up here. 17 November is a very special day. Not to mind 16 March is even more special, because after 16 March, it means you're too late.

Next to options specific to the GAC, so the Early Warnings and the consensus advice, there are several processes open to anybody, which, of course, then includes GAC members. So that's also lovely to hear we are part of the ICANN community. Funding support is available for an objection or an appeal, but it's not mandatory. Obviously, you can always just file an objection, but then you have to pay by your own means, and I think that's also important for us to remember. Good point. You need an ICANN account.

Now, I trust that you, as a GAC member, GAC representative, all have an ICANN account, but it's probably good to talk to your stakeholders, and maybe ICANN can make something available, if not already there, on how to quickly set up an ICANN account, if you want to comment. Then that kind of brings me to the coming sessions.

We probably, and we'll come back to that after the coffee, need to discuss a mechanism to signal that a comment or Early Warning has been addressed to our satisfaction. That's something that's, well, in my mind, good thought, after the fact. And then I also heard a request to see if there is a need and whether it's possible to somehow find a bilateral, more confidential channel to set up a conversation with a particular applicant before any comments or Early Warnings are published.

And then the last comment I jotted down is the GAC consensus advice always remains open as an option to let the board know that we have issues with that. And then, Christine, if you allow me to

wrap this up, because, as I said, there's plenty of more sessions to come. So taking my takeaways back, we'll meet straight after the coffee, from 3 to 4.

There is another session about Direction on Next Round and operational readiness. So I think that's where we can discuss some of the discussions just brought up. I'll be here, Benedette will be here, we will again be joined by Marika and some of her team to talk us through some more operational round readiness and updates.

And then tomorrow morning, Sunday morning, 9am local time, we will have a session specific to the Applicant Support Program. So that's where we can look into the ASP update and discuss some of the lessons learned. And then finally, and that's scheduled for Tuesday morning, 9:00am Bali time, we kind of have an open hour, and my intention is to really treat that as an open hour to look at what we now know. So open discussion on what we have seen published, open discussion on what we have heard in these other sessions. So we have plenty of room, I think, to have further discussions about this topic, as we all get, this is the big one, and we're all here together, so make use of our time.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Thank you very much, Marco. And we are almost at the end of this session. So just to say that there were some questions to think about that we might want to consider for our discussions in the next sessions. And one final thing, I specifically want to thank our topic leads for the preparation of the material for this together with

the support staff. With that, I will close this session, and thank you all very much. We have a coffee break, and we need to be back in the room at 3:00pm, correct? Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]