ICANN87 Bali | AGM – GAC Discussion on New gTLDs Next Round (1 of 2)
Saturday, October 17, 2026 – 15:00 to 16:00 WITA

MARCO HOGEWONING Good afternoon.

JULIA CHARVOLEN Please find your seats and take your seats. Thank you. I welcome you to the GAC discussion on the new gTLD at ICANN87. Today is 17 October, 3:00 PM local time. Please note that this meeting follows the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, as well as the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct. Translation is available in six UN languages and Portuguese. If you would like to speak, please raise your hand in Zoom and state your name and the language you will be speaking, in case you are speaking a language other than English. And please speak at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation. I will now leave the floor to Marco Hogewoning, GAC Vice Chair. Please, over to you. Thank you.

MARCO HOGEWONING Thank you, Julia. Good afternoon, colleagues. I'll be guiding you through as our chair, Nico, is unavailable, busy with a board meeting this afternoon. Can I have the next slide, please?

As mentioned, more new gTLDs. So we again have a couple of colleagues from ICANN organization on stage to provide us even with more information about the next round and what has

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happened in the last few months. And then, as we were discussing, we leave about half the session open, in which Benedetta and I will guide you through what is done so far in terms of GAC readiness and pick up on the questions we just had left over from the previous session. Before we go on, next slide, please. As the GAC new gTLD topic leads, I'm here as your Vice Chair. I'm also one of the GAC topic leads. You see probably a few familiar names here, but this is the team within the GAC that has been working on this topic also very extensively with ICANN org to plan these sessions. So Tracy Hackshaw in the room with you. Rida Tahir from Canada, who unfortunately couldn't join us. Ken Ying, I believe, is in the room, from Chinese Taipei. And Tiago, you already heard this morning. So this is a joint operation. I drew the short straw. I'm with you here this afternoon. And with that, I'll hand over to Marika, I guess.

MARIKA KONINGS Thank you very much, Marco. I'll kick this off and hello, welcome back, everyone, again. I think this is session three out of four that we're talking about new gTLD Program-related topics. So my name is Marika Konings. I'm the lead for the new gTLD Program, joined here by Jared and Eduardo, and other team members are in the room as well to help address any questions you may have. I think the next slide has our agenda. We do one more.

So what we'll be covering as part of our overview is basically items two to five. We'll first have a look at the 2026 round timeline, where we're currently at and what is coming next. Looking at 2026 round

application highlights. I hope you were all very excited when you saw the Reveal Day results earlier this week. Last week? Where are we at? Last week. And then looking at as well what's next in the evaluation process and then a quick look at the Application Publication and Statistics before we'll hand you back to Marco and Benedetta to look at GAC operational readiness. Go to the next slide, please.

Just a quick disclaimer, and you will have already heard this in previous sessions. Again, a lot of the information we're sharing is for informational purposes. The authoritative information is contained in the Applicant Guidebook. So please use that for your reference if you're looking for the rules and procedures that govern the program. If we go to the next slide, please.

This is a quick plug for all the other sessions that are happening this week. The program has been here with you today, and I think we still have another session tomorrow with you as well. But we've also prepared for a number of community sessions that are really intended to help applicants as well as community members to understand and prepare for what is next and what their role is in the different processes. So on Sunday, that starts with a pre-evaluation stage overview. Tuesday, we focus on application community input. On Wednesday, string evaluation. On Thursday, we have a general wrap-up. And on Monday, we are having a bit of a more plenary-type session where we're having a high-level overview of the timeline, what is next, what have we seen on Reveal Day, which again is open, of course, for everyone. And then I also

want to mention, we do have a booth here. It's right next to the entrance. Staff members will be there at various moments of time. If you do have further questions that you would like answers to, please come and find us at the booth if you're not able to attend any of these sessions, and we'll, of course, try to address your questions there. Anyone who's participating remotely, we do have other channels as well, globalsupport@icann.org for those that have general questions. And if you're an applicant, we have TAMS available, the TLD Application Management System, where you can submit your questions directly. We go to the next slide, please. And the next one. Thanks.

So this is a timeline that I think most of you will have seen previously, but now we actually have some confirmed dates in there as well. I think you're all aware that we had a submission period running from the 30th of April to the 12th of August. That has now closed. That was then followed by a Reveal Day, which happened on the 7th of October. That, at the same time, marked the start of what is referred to as the replacement period, a 14-day period, a 14-day window that runs until the 21st of October, during which those applicants that submitted an eligible replacement string have an opportunity to switch to that replacement string. That then will lead us into String Confirmation Day on the 17th of November, and then shortly after that, string evaluation will begin as well. String Confirmation Day will also mark the start of the community input and objection period, and Elisa provided details on what that entails in the previous session. And that will run until

the 16th of March 2027. There are, of course, still further milestones that will follow that, amongst others, the prioritization draw, publication of string evaluation results, and the start of applicant and application evaluations, and timelines and dates for those will be published in the near future as well as the team is going through its further planning for those activities as we progress. We go to the next slide, please. And the next one.

So this is just a quick reminder around the objectives of the program. And I think someone in the previous session asked when we would be looking at assessment, what did we find on Reveal Day. But taking a step back, looking at the overall objective that was affirmed by the Subsequent Procedures Final Report, the report that the community developed that set out the rules and guidance for the program, is that the primary purposes of the new gTLDs are to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS. It is important to note that although we have also the SubPro Final Report as well as the Competition, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Choice Review Team recommendations, the CCT, they do not establish success indicators or benchmarks. They look at establishing metrics, basically aspects that we need to measure, and areas in which the program can be assessed. But there's no numerical benchmark that determines whether a round is a success. The CCT work is explicitly focusing on assessing the effects of new gTLD expansion on competition, consumer choice, and consumer trust, as well as the effectiveness of the application and evaluation processes and safeguards. And ICANN has worked

with the community to develop the metrics and baseline data that support those assessments. And many of those are focused on what happens after the evaluation process completes and gTLD applicants are hopefully successful and able to sign their agreement with ICANN. Important to note, there is a specific success indicator for the Applicant Support Program, and I think we'll talk more about that tomorrow, where there is a numerical success factor that has been created. So as I said, I think it's important to note there is, of course, an objective, and we are looking at what the data tell us, but there's no overall numerical threshold that was set. And of course, this is just a first look at the data based on what Reveal Day has told us, but there's still many more steps to come in the process. If we go to the next slide. Thank you.

So this is a snapshot of the current data following Reveal Day. An important disclaimer here at the top, these statistics will remain subject to change until String Confirmation Day on the 17th of November. And obviously, further changes may occur after that as well, depending on evaluation results and other processes that are applicable. So there are 1, 650 total applications that are proceeding in the application process. Of those, 1, 169 submitted a replacement string, but of those, only 442 are eligible. And I think we discussed this previously, this means that they are not identical to another applicant's primary applied-for string or replacement string. 481 organizations submitted new gTLD applications. There are 263 contention sets that include 891 applications in contention.

And the map in the middle highlights the regional distribution of applicants and applications. And we'll have a further look on that in a future slide. But we were happy to report that from the 1, 650 applications from 481 applicant organizations, they come from all five ICANN regions. You can also see here the number of types of applications here, which we'll also cover in a bit more detail on the next slide. As said, Reveal Day, of course, provides an important early indicator, but diversity in the DNS is broader than a single application category. And the data may therefore, of course, be too early to draw any conclusions at this point based on what we've seen here. And I think with that, we can go to the next slide.

We're diving a little bit deeper into some of the numbers here. So this is looking a bit more detail on the contention sets. As I said, 263 contention sets were identified following Reveal Day. 891 applications are currently in contention, which basically means that most of the contention sets contain multiple applications. I did just lose my Zoom, but that's okay. We've discussed this as well in some of the previous sessions. There are a number of contention resolution mechanisms that are in place. Replacement string is one of those. Applicants have the current period to make that determination if they have an eligible replacement string. There's an opportunity for brand applicants that are in contention to use the string change process that is available to them. Community priority evaluation, another process that's available to community applicants. And then there's, of course, ICANN new gTLD auction process. Maybe an important reminder here as well. Although

applicants may be able to get out of the current or existing contention set through replacement string, that may not mean that they are guaranteed being out of contention because there are, of course, other processes that could place an applicant in contention, such as string similarity or singular/plural notifications, which we've also spoken about previously. And maybe an important note as well to remind everyone that private resolution of contention is prohibited under the Applicant Guidebook section 5.2.3. Go to the next slide.

Here, further breakdown of the applicant geographic distribution. As said, we have all five ICANN regions represented with Europe having the highest percentage of applications. It's 53.5% from 198 applicants. Oh, I see here that the number does not align. I'll need to look at that. Sorry, I mixed them up. But it's, I think, important to remember here as well that just because an applicant may be incorporated in a certain location, that, of course, doesn't necessarily mean that they do business there. So again, this gives us some indication but does not necessarily tell the whole picture about applications and what it means for the DNS and how a gTLD may be used in the future.

If we go to the next slide, I think it's the last one I had in my section. This just gives a more detailed breakdown in the different aspects of participation and intended use. We have 21 IDN applications, or internationalized domain names, representing a 1.3 share of all applications. Community designated applications, 16. Geographic name applications, 15.. Brand, 333. And ASP-supported applicants,

51 that submitted an application. And we'll have more time tomorrow to talk about the Applicant Support Program and what the Reveal Day data has shown. I think with that, I'm handing it to Jared.

JARED ERWIN

Thanks, Marika. Excuse me. Thanks, Marika. Hi, everyone. My name is Jared Erwin. I'm also on the new gTLD Program team and one of the GAP co-leads. GAP—I'm sorry, we can go to the next slides. GAP refers to the gTLD application process, which is the function under the new gTLD Program that houses all the different stages, which you now see on the screen, of the application lifecycle. And so I'm going to walk you through a couple of the key points about where we are in the process and what's coming up next.

So you can see here, and if you were in our earlier sessions, you probably saw this already, but we are in the pre-evaluation stage, which precedes things like string evaluation and application evaluation, and also the community input and objections period, and contention. And just to note here that this is the general lifecycle for applications, but it's not necessarily linear, as some applications may go through the community input or be subject to an objection or if they're in contention, have to go through those processes before moving on to subsequent steps. And we'll talk a little bit more about what pre-evaluation means and other steps related to that on the next slides. Next slide, please.

So again, you may have already seen this in earlier sessions, but we are now there at step three following Reveal Day, which occurred on the 7th of October. As you know, the application submission period ended on the 12th of August, a couple of months ago already. And following that, there was an administrative check, and then Reveal Day, and now we are in the replacement period, where applicants with eligible replacement strings can choose. They'll have the option now to choose to proceed with their replacement string application or not. And again, this is designed to help them potentially avoid contention. This period will end in a couple of days, on the 21st, and that will lead us to String Confirmation Day on the 17th of November, which is when the final applied-for strings and applications will be published, as well as the updated list of contention sets based on the outcome of the replacement period. This will also mark the beginning of the community input and string evaluation periods. And then you also note here the step five, the prioritization draw, which is to occur in the first half of 2027. We talked again quite a bit about this in the earlier sessions, but this is the draw to determine priority numbers for application processing. And this becomes relevant only after string evaluation for things like application evaluation. So the draw will occur in the first half of 2027, which more aligns with when the priority numbers come into play after the conclusion of string evaluation. Next slide, please.

So now moving into a little bit more detail about what happens during the community input period, as well as the string evaluation period, which again, you may have already seen a lot about earlier.

But the community input period includes different processes related to application comments, GAC member early warnings, GAC consensus advice, singular/plural notifications, and objections. For application comments, this allows anyone to bring issues to the attention of ICANN applicants and evaluators. Those can be submitted from String Confirmation Day within the 104 days following String Confirmation Day or 30 days after a specific change request that requires a comment period. The outcome of those comments is there's no direct impact on applications, but those comments might be considered by evaluators as they conduct evaluations. GAC member early warnings, again, we just talked a lot about this in the previous session, but these allow GAC members and observers to provide an early indication that an application is potentially problematic. And again, those are submitted during the community input period. And again, no direct impact on the application based on that early warning, but it may be a signal that the application could be the subject of GAC consensus advice. And GAC consensus advice, I think you're probably aware of what that consists of, but this is advice to the ICANN Board related to applications which are sensitive or potentially violate public policy or laws. And that can be submitted at any time, and the outcome there is that the Board will make a decision as to whether the application can proceed or not or needs to proceed with modifications. During this period, there's also a process for singular/plural notification, which is open to anyone who identifies if an applied-for string is the singular or plural of another applied-for string or delegated TLD or a string from a

previous new gTLD round or blocked name, which would trigger an evaluation period. And then finally, objections, which can be submitted on different grounds, string confusion, legal rights, limited public interest, or community objections, and that's available to those parties with standing, and the panel will determine whether the application can proceed or needs to be modified. Next slide, please. Oh, I see a hand from Jorge.

MARCO HOGEWONING Switzerland?

JORGE CANCIO Thank you, Marco. Jorge Cancio from Switzerland, for the record. I just was thinking whether in the interest of time and as we've seen these slides a while ago, whether we could go to those aspects that are really new and we haven't discussed before. Thank you.

MARCO HOGEWONING Yes. I think that makes sense, but I think this slide here is, I don't think we've discussed this as yet. These are the key components of the string evaluation. So if that sounds okay, I can proceed with this slide. I do see there's another hand, though. India, you have the floor, please.

SANTHOSH Thank you, Santosh, for the record. So regarding the GAC consensus, as making a preliminary research of 1, 615 strings, it has

been seen that certain strings like. Passport,. Railway,. Defense,. Civic, and. Aid. So these are the five preliminary strings which have come to the notice, by which it is used for public services in most of the countries. So whether GAC consensus can be raised on these strings, so it is not limited to these strings. There could be further strings also. As mentioned in the GAC consensus advice, it is problematic and it is interested to the national laws. So could these strings be considered as GAC consensus advice? Thank you.

MARCO HOGEWONING I don't know if any of the ICANN colleagues have any comments, but, as we learned in the previous session, GAC advice is always possible. And then we have further slots on Tuesday where it might be useful for us as GAC members to talk a bit about the issues you just raised and what we think is the best way forward, GAC advice being one of them. But as far as I understood, yeah, if we see an issue with a string, the GAC can produce advice. Anything from ICANN org on that part?

JARED ERWIN Thanks, Marco. No, nothing to add. That is up to the GAC to determine. I think the only thing I would say, and I think there have been other questions about this as well, is that this may also be where the safeguard assessment comes in, where we have a safeguard assessment panel that will review all the strings and whether they fall into specific categories that require additional safeguards in their contract, safeguard PICs, public interest

commitments. So that may, based on the strings that you mentioned, may be a place where they might be subject to additional safeguards. And as I was going to mention anyway, and I'll just mention now, of course, the safeguards are based on GAC advice from the 2012 round, the Beijing Communiqué, which listed out different categories of strings that would require additional safeguards to ensure public safety. Thanks.

SANTHOSH Thank you for clarification. Now, if we use safeguards also, but there is a chance of DNS abuse using these strings. Most of the Internet users are used to book their flight tickets or railway tickets using similar kind of a domain, which is existing. Now, if we have a similar kind of a, I'm just taking an example of. Passport, it could be, there could be a chance of DNS abuse using. Passport. Thank you.

JARED ERWIN Thank you. I'm not sure I heard a question or if that's more of a comment. I don't know if I can comment on potential DNS abuse related to that string, but again, there's GAC advice that could be issued for strings or where the GAC has concerns, or safeguards potentially might be another mechanism based on that evaluation panel.

MARIKA KONINGS

And this is Marika. Maybe just to add, obviously, all successful applicants that go through the contracting process are required as well to meet all the other requirements that already exist or that will come into play at some point in relation to DNS abuse. I think you may be aware that there are actively ongoing processes, so any consensus policy that is developed by the community and adopted by the ICANN Board will become applicable to all gTLDs, including successful new gTLD applicants.

MARCO HOGEWONING

Thank you. There's a bit of a queue forming right now. I've got Switzerland and the UK. So Switzerland, you have the floor, Jorge.

JORGE CANCIO

Jorge Cancio, Switzerland. I'll try to be brief. In the other session, we had an initial discussion on safeguards, and we were told that there would be a session on safeguards later in the week, but which conflicts with the GAC Communiqué. So maybe as an internal question, let's try to have the right people on this safeguards panel on Tuesday morning in the other session we have so we can discuss that during our GAC plenary time. If that would be possible, I think we would very much benefit because as Santosh and others are mentioning, there are already some strings that raise safeguard questions and I guess we should use the opportunity of the in-person meeting we have here because later on we have to wait to Lisboa, which is wonderful of course, but only in March.

MARCO HOGEWONING Thank you, Jorge. Yeah, I think we can. And as mentioned, we've got more time scheduled later this week to come back to certain topics if we can't resolve them right here, right now, and then I guess we'll never be able to resolve everything right here, right now. Maybe UK, Paul?

PAUL BLAKER Thank you. Paul Blaker, for the record. I just wanted to support Jorge's request. I think it will be really important that we, as GAC members, understand in detail how the safeguard assessment will work. We probably need to be reminded about the previous GAC advice on this. We would like to know what the process will be, what the timeline will be, what the criteria will be, what the possible commitments would be, because I think this will be incredibly important when we look at the applied-for strings in regulated sectors, whether that's medicine or finance or education or fundraising. So if we could have that kind of detailed information at the session on Tuesday, I think it will be a really valuable use of time. Thank you.

MARCO HOGEWONING Thank you. Okay, noted. I'm very quickly looking at ICANN org. We can also take this offline, but do you see fit on joining us on Tuesday for this?

MARIKA KONINGS What time?

MARCO HOGEWONING Tuesday morning, I think, first slot.

MARIKA KONINGS Yeah, I think we'll look at our calendars, and we can check so we also make sure that we provide you with some level-setting information on the safeguard assessment because we understand that indeed that's of great interest. So that will hopefully then inform your further conversation as well.

MARCO HOGEWONING Thank you. That's appreciated. And I just checked, indeed, it's Tuesday at 9:00 AM. Then currently in my queue it's Giacomo at WBU.

GIACOMO MAZZONE Yes, I moved in the room in the meantime. Thank you for the floor. I have some general comments because it seems that now this is the session to make general comments on the whole round. And these comments are made on behalf of the Human Rights and International Law Working Group.

The first, it's useful that Marika reminded us which were the three main goals of this round. The main one was foster diversity, number one. If I look at the statistics on the base of what we have received until now, we have 16 applications from Africa. That is less

than 1%. Latin America is 0.93%, and the IDN applications are 1.3% of the total. Even if you include Asia-Pacific, so let's say most of the world, we arrive at 13.5% of the applications. So if this is promoting diversity, I think that this rings another bell. And probably we need to think that as GAC, in general as ICANN, that we need to change the way we try to achieve diversity because apparently it didn't work. And I hope that on this, with other GAC, we have a bigger reflection.

The second point is, I've not got the time to go through all of it, but I see that there are some strings that, in theory, we were supposed to have agreed that we have not rights to be there. For instance, I see that there are eight applications for. Official. That, for me, seems quite dangerous as an application. And there was also. State that seems deactivated. I don't know exactly what this means, but it's still in the list. About. Official, just to give you an example, when I was preparing my application for the visa, it appears to me at least 10 different applications that all of them pretend to be the government of Indonesia. And I have to go carefully one by one to see which one was the real one. I imagine that if there is. State or. Official that are for sale, the risk that I will be misunderstood or I will make the wrong application is very high.

Then another point about the statistics. I haven't seen any list of the community applications, when it will be available, which they are, because we know that this is a category that deserves special attention from the GAC. And the last point is, as I mentioned before, for geographic applications, that there is no supporting letter in the

documentation available, I think is a mistake. And I mentioned this morning, and I hope that now this will be made available. I understand that there is a problem about the autographed signature, but we don't need that. We need to know who are the supporting authorities. Thank you very much.

MARIKA KONINGS

Thank you for those questions and comments. Maybe starting at the end, as I said, or as we explained previously, the support letter not being publicly posted is a result of the Applicant Guidebook and the questions there. This is similar to 2012. In 2012, there were a number of applicants or supporting authorities that submitted their letters to ICANN through correspondence. I think that is still a process that's open to anyone. And of course, there are ways in which GAC members can express their desire to have that information available, which will hopefully then have applicants come forward. As I said, we're following the process as it was set out in 2012. But as I said, there are other means in which applicants can at least make that information available should they wish so. On the question on the community applications, you can already see that. If you go to APS, and if you select under TLD type, community, it will bring up all the applications that have selected community as their type of application. I think you mentioned also the question on deactivated. If it shows deactivated, it means that's an application that's not proceeding forward. It's most likely a replacement string that was deemed not eligible.

And then on your first question, and I think indeed that's a good question, as the program progresses and looks at the objectives that were set, what can we do more of, less of, or different? I think we have shared previously with the GAC the outreach and engagement report, where it shows the spread of engagement activities that our teams work through to raise awareness. But it's of course very important to note as well that awareness does not equate to an application there. There are many other factors that play into that somewhere. Some where ICANN may play a role, others may be depending on local market situations or regulation or other areas. But I think it's something where jointly we can, of course, look at what more, less, better can be done. And of course, very important to note as well, this is one round of many. So I think also, at least from our approach on the outreach and engagement activities, it has always been with having in mind that having that first conversation, having that first awareness, may not immediately lead to an ability to apply, but at least it allows an open door to start a conversation, start thinking through it. Because again, it's of course a significant undertaking applying for a gTLD. So as I said, from our perspective, this is a longer-term effort and not necessarily something, of course, we would have liked to see maybe different numbers here, but we're also very aware that this is not a one-off engagement or opportunity, but a longer-term effort for which we need, I think, everyone's support to get the word out and look at what more or different we can do to achieve the goals of the program.

MARCO HOGEWONING Thank you, Marika. Thank you, Giacomo. Just on the point, and of course, diversity is really important, helping people from underserved regions. Tomorrow morning, 9:00 AM, we have a session dedicated to the ASP, so we can further delve into diversity lessons learned. And again, we have some ICANN org staff available for us to guide us through some of what I've seen, some of the data. But plenty of opportunity. In the interest of time, may I ask you to quickly move on to the last presentation?

EDUARDO Thank you. Yes. And we're going to go pretty quickly on the following slides because it involves some information that we've already seen, but we do want to show a quick walkthrough on the website of the Application Publication and Statistics System, or APS for short. So just a quick recap. The website is already available, has been since Reveal Day on the 7th of October, and this is where you can find all of the submitted applications and their current status. And it will be updated once again once we get to String Confirmation Day in November. Next slide, please.

On the section of the applications, here we see on top highlighted the four main sections of APS. Right now, the ones that are available until String Confirmation Day are just statistics and applications. The one with the highlight number two is where you will be able to find all of the submitted applications with the relevant details of those, including the applicant, the strings, the

geographic region. And all of the filters that we see further down below is what will let you focus your search a little bit better to identify which applications have a related field or details that are more relevant to what you might be concerned with reviewing. And just a quick reminder here, because the section of contention sets right now is going to be updated at a later date, the actual list of contention sets, for those that are interested in looking at those, are linked in the initial paragraph of this page. Next slide, please.

So in terms of the search filters, this kind of relates to the question we just received and what Marika spoke about. You will be able to type here, to search for specific strings, specific applicants, or identifiers of the applications if you know what specific one you're looking for on the top search box. And then the second box that's highlighted here with number seven, you will be able to have a number of filters where you can check by region, you can search by the application type, you can search by the string or TLD type that was applied for. The part about application labels, which is the rightmost field that we see on screen, is where you can search for other relevant details, such as if the application is from an applicant supported in the ASP program, if it provided a code of conduct exemption, a number of other details that are relevant, if it requested the community priority evaluation. All of those can be searched using these fields. The more you put in this form, the more conditions the applications need to meet to be listed in the results that are shown below. And you can see the actual details of each individual application by clicking on the string or the

application ID that's shown in the list. For those that are more comfortable working with spreadsheets, like in Google Docs or Excel, you can also download your list into a CSV format so that you can work offline. That will allow you to see all of the high-level details of the applications in the resulting list below. And that might be more helpful for those of you that are interested in filtering or looking at applications based on their attributes. And that's it for me. I do encourage people to, if you have more questions or want to know more about APS, we do have the booth downstairs, so feel free to visit us over there. Thanks.

MARCO HOGEWONING Thank you. Just out of curiosity, who of you in the room has already looked at the actual APS website? A few. Well, do try. It might look mighty impressive, but it's relatively easy to use once you get the hang of it. And as was mentioned, there's people around here who can help you, so better try it while we have them around. Thank you for that. Unless there are any pressing questions regarding what was just presented, I'd like to turn it over to our next section. We have about 15 minutes left in this session. So thank you once again for all your time and see you back soon.

With that, the GAC operational readiness, which is me and Benedetta here to my right. And we have some slides prepared, but I think most of them were shown this morning. If I can have the next slide. I think we kind of would like to skip straight to the discussion, if that's okay, Benedetta? Do you want to? Okay. Then let's just

move straight into the discussion, and I kind of like to pick up from the UK's comment from the previous session because I thought it was valuable. So far, what we have been doing, and if you flip to the next slide. And the next slide. This is where we are, in terms of timeline. We've talked you through this this morning. So we have various pathways open for the GAC to make comments and, of course, for the rest of the community as well that can make comments. The GAC can issue early warnings. We can, of course, issue consensus advice if we think the matter is pressing and we feel like taking it that way. This is all nice. We have a system to deliver our comments to the applicants, and then especially with the early warnings, that that's sort of the starting point to have a conversation. This morning, our Swiss colleague, Jorge, already mentioned, like, "Maybe that's not the best start to go immediately public." So looking back at what we've done so far is how to deliver these comments via early warning or via the comments or via GAC advice. So what my takeaway there is, they're all public, and my readout from the Swiss comment is maybe that's not the best start to immediately go public. Maybe we want to have a conversation with the applicant beforehand, before we go in all guns blazing and make public comments. And then the other thing that was sort of for me and like, have a thought about that is, yes, we start that conversation. People make adjustments. Maybe we make adjustments. Compromise is found. We're okay. How do we want to let the applicant, how do we want to let the rest of the ICANN community know that, yes, our comments we feel have been addressed. We're okay. Now, of course, we can reopen the

readiness documents. My immediate suggestion would be to seek then a third item, and especially regarding what to do when we feel satisfied, but in that, as a Vice Chair, as one of the gTLD topic leads, also in your hands, how would such a process look like? What do you feel is important? Maybe United Kingdom, Paul, you want to come back to your comments this morning? Or Jorge? What are you thinking? Paul?

PAUL BLAKER

Thank you, Marco. Paul Blaker for the record. Yes, I think obviously it's important to remember that GAC member early warnings, they're not from the GAC as a whole. They're from a member of the GAC or a group of members of the GAC. And I'm thinking, for example, in our case, if the United Kingdom issued an early warning about an application, and then we spoke to the applicant, and we found that all of our concerns were addressed, and we were okay, then we would like to be able to communicate that. We would like to close the early warning in some way, and not having it exist permanently. So I think it would be good if we could introduce the ability for GAC members to close early warnings if they choose to do so. It's important for us as GAC members to have that ability, but it might also be important for applicants to have the certainty to know formally that the early warning is no longer extant. Perhaps we could introduce that without changing all of the operational frameworks. I don't think it needs to be a big change. But if we could introduce that ability, it would be helpful. Thank you.

MARCO HOGEWONING

Thank you. I'm not going to put you on the spot, but of course, if ICANN has themselves any useful input on what might be possible, you're more than welcome. Meanwhile, my queue is Switzerland, Jorge, and then I think from China. So Jorge, and please keep it slightly short.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Marco. So before I go back to what I raised before, I would like to support what Paul just mentioned. I think that's a good idea. And on the point I made, before issuing a GAC early warning, even if it's from an individual member or from a number of members, there might be the need to seek clarifications or more information about the application to have an informal exchange with the applicant from the member state or the member states or the observers concerned. So I would suggest, and I hope Benedetta takes note of this, that we have some Communiqué language or something in that sense that states that we would like to have a means of communication between interested GAC community members with the respective applicants in order to seek clarifications or place questions about the application, in order to consider issuing or not a GAC early warning. Of course, some members might always find their way to find the right communication channel with the applicant, but it would be good, I think, to have this opportunity equally available for all GAC

community members without considering their resources and their knowledge of the ICANN system. Thank you.

MARCO HOGEWONING: Thank you, Switzerland. And of course, with the disclaimer that the AGB is what it is. Yeah, I'm again happy to hear, see any ideas within the existing framework. What can we do? Meanwhile then maybe Feng, China. Hope you have the solution for us.

GUO FENG: Thank you, Marco. Actually, I'd like to briefly comment on this round of applications. So Guo Feng from China for the record. So at this critical juncture, I'd like to share some preliminary considerations. So as previous speakers pointed out, top-level domain strings may carry multiple semantic meanings. Subject to different linguistic and cultural contexts, they are prone to varied interpretations. So inevitably, some strings may trigger controversies and even create potential risks to public interest. Over the past week, we have received continuous feedback from Chinese Internet community and stakeholders. The community has raised some concerns over certain strings, holding that these strings entail potential public policy risks, which may raise issues related to public interest, linguistic culture, and social governance. So at this current stage, we still keep collecting comments, proposals, and evidence from Chinese community and stakeholders, and conduct assessment of the public policy implications raised by certain applications. So going forward, we

may engage with relevant applicants as appropriate, based on assessment progress, to clarify concerns and explore feasible risk mitigation measures. And later on, we may also use GAC early warning and other tools to express our views. China will maintain close communication and exchange with ICANN and GAC members to jointly safeguard the public interest of the Internet. We will also continue to listen to the opinion of the community and engage in friendly consultation with all parties. Thank you very much.

MARCO HOGEWONING Thank you, China. Very much appreciate your standing here. And of course, we're in this together, the community, the applicants, us as GAC members, and then let's try and keep to find each other. Looking at my clock, we're running out of time, but again, we can pick up tomorrow morning, especially with regards to lessons learned, looking back, looking forward, and of course, there's room for more discussion on Tuesday. Marika, you have the final comment then?

MARIKA KONINGS Yes, maybe just one reminder. Of course, changes may occur to the strings as a result of the string replacement period, and I think you're all aware that String Confirmation Day marks the final set of strings that are proceeding, and that, of course, then marks as well the start of the community input processes that are available to flag issues or concerns, including a GAC early warning. Just to note, and I think the team is discussing a little bit in the background, we

heard the question on, is there a way to mark GAC early warning complete? Maybe that is something that the GAC team can look at as you post those on, I think, your website or Wiki page, to kind of add resolved or addressed. But I think at least on our side, we don't have a mechanism currently to change the flag because GAC early warning was received, so we do mark that. But maybe linking back to the Wiki page, which is potentially an easy path to mark where a resolution has taken place or concerns have been addressed. But we're actively talking to colleagues here to see what, if anything, is possible, and I'm sure they'll come back to that as well. Thank you.

MARCO HOGEWONING And thank you for coming along. Benedetta, anything from your side? Then I guess then with your comments heard, we'll take those back. We'll come back to some of these points later this week. I'm afraid not everything will be resolved this week. But also, and I think important, Marika, as you just said, not everything's set in stone yet. So especially when it comes to particular individual strings, we might also want to wait a bit and see what String Confirmation brings. Notwithstanding, of course, we can have a preliminary discussion. We can flag especially broader issues that we as GAC might identify. With that, we're on top of the hour, so I'm about to let you go for coffee. Not before I announce the next session, which will start in half an hour, in which we will be talking about universal acceptance. So another take on inclusivity and broadening the reach of the DNS and broadening the reach of

Internet. So please be back for that session at 4:30 PM. Enjoy your coffee.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]