ICANN87 Bali | AGM – GAC Operations Session
Sunday, October 18, 2026 – 13:15 to 14:30 WITA

GULTEN TEPE

Welcome to the ICANN87 GAC Operations session on Sunday, 18th of October at 13:15 local time. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

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And please remember to state your name for the record and the language you will be speaking in case speaking in a language other than English. And please speak at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation. I am sorry. I will now leave the floor over to Ian Sheldon, GAC Vice-Chair. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON

Thank you, Gulten. I am Ian Sheldon, GAC Vice-Chair, for the record. Unfortunately, Nico is tied up in board discussions at present, so he has asked me to chair this discussion this afternoon.

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.

We have got a little bit of time set aside to talk about some core operational issues for the GAC. Next slide, please.

There is a discussion here on roles and participation. There are some vacancies. Like to take a little bit of time to talk about how the GAC gets involved in other workstreams. There are some amendments we are looking to make to the operating principles. Hopefully, this should be familiar to you all as we kicked this discussion off at the last meeting.

Our colleague Guo Feng will be leading us through some of that discussion. We will be spending a little bit of time talking about the GAC's interpretation of the continuous improvement program and how we kick off that first cycle. And finally, we will spend a bit of time talking about the annual plan: what we have done, how we might want to improve things going forward, and lessons learned for the next cycle. Next slide, please. Marco is also not feeling great this afternoon, so I will take us through this discussion as well.

There is a couple of touchpoints that the GAC has here on some of the roles across the community, whether they are internal to GAC or engagements with a range of other parts of the ICANN community as well. We have obviously got the GAC leadership, so this is a chair and five vice-chair roles. Their role is to provide some overall leadership, direction, help coordinate the GAC's work and priorities, as well as speak on behalf of the GAC in broader ICANN engagements.

There are working groups within the GAC, such as the Public Safety Working Group, the Human Rights and International Law Working Group, the Underserved Regions Working Group, the Operating Principles Evolution Working Group, and the UA and IDNs Working Group. Each of these requires chairs to run and drive some of that work. And this also requires a fair bit of engagement from each of you as well to make sure that the GAC can form positions, work through documents, and provide advice from those working groups to the broader committee.

You have topic leads as well as small groups. These are more ad hoc basis working methods. These help coordinate GAC work on specific policy issues and support some of those considerations around what the GAC's position is on certain items. We of course have points of contact, so these often act as liaisons and maintain working relationships between the GAC and other community groups. They also help facilitate information and coordination. And finally, GAC appointments.

This is probably one of the most useful levers that the GAC has in providing influence into some of the core policymaking that other parts of the community have here as well. Those positions participate on behalf of the GAC in things cross-community processes where the GAC has a designated seat or a specific appointment.

Next slide, please. The current GAC points of contact are across the ALAC with Christina, the ccNSO, which is presently myself, the

GNSO, jointly shared between Manal and Rita, and the Universal Acceptance group as well, we have Abdalmonem. I will likely have to step back from that ccNSO role, and it would be good to have another GAC point of contact once I transition from that current role into the chair role at the conclusion of this meeting. There are a couple cross-community vacancies.

For the Independent Review Process and the Implementation Oversight Team, there is a vacancy for the GAC. Similarly, there is an IRP community representative group with a vacancy for the GAC, and the ICANN Planning Prioritization Group also has a vacancy for the GAC.

It would be fantastic if you could consider how much capacity you have and whether you would like to step forward into one of these roles and make sure the GAC's views are considered and integrated into those community group work efforts. Please also have a think about contributing to those existing working groups.

There is a lot of opportunity across the ICANN community, a lot of thinking happening within the GAC, and a lot of that work is done by a small group of GAC members. I think if you care about the work that happens at ICANN, you should really find opportunities to get more directly involved in these efforts and find ways to influence thinking as early as possible. Of course, topic leads are always an option.

And similarly, there are options here for more direct regional engagement, where you can bring some of the views from your

country or from your region to some of the GAC work. And again, as you get involved in these work efforts early on, the better the outcome.

Are there any questions? Any reflections? Nigel, see your hand, please. To you.

NIGEL CASSIMIRE Thank you. Nigel Cassimire, CTU. What is the ICANN Planning Prioritization Group? Not so familiar with that one.

IAN SHELDON I am wondering would staff perhaps like to provide some insight into what that group is up to? Or we can take that question on notice and come back. Lars, please.

LARS HOFFMANN This is Lars, Lars Hoffmann from staff. The planning group is a cross-community group that looks at community-developed recommendations or other work that the board has approved for improvement. It looks annually at the resource availability across the org and across the community especially, and then decides or recommends at the very least which of these efforts should have priority and be implemented first. We had a call across the GAC for volunteers for this position, I want to say in June maybe.

We did not get any volunteers. In coordination with the leadership, we have a staff member who attends these sessions and reports

back to the GAC mailing list on any discussion items or action items that come out of that group. I think there has been one update so far that has been shared with the GAC as a whole.

Obviously, if there is somebody here, you know of a colleague who would like to participate representing the GAC in those discussions, that would be very much welcome. Otherwise, staff will continue to inform the GAC on these discussions, with the note that obviously staff, GAC support staff, is not speaking on behalf of the GAC, we are not participating in any decisions that were being made, we are simply observing and reporting back to this group. I hope that is helpful. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON Thank you, Lars. I see a hand from Santosh. Please.

T. SANTHOSH Thank you, Ian. I am adding to what my colleague Cassimire has mentioned. If GAC staff can explain about the current cross-community vacancies, say, a one para about what is the Independent Review Process and the IRP IOT, it will be useful for the GAC members here to contribute. I would request the GAC staff to circulate on a mail to explain about this current cross-community vacancies. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON Thank you. I think Lars had suggested that some of that information had already been circulated to GAC members, but we

can recirculate that information again. And if you certainly have any more questions once you have had a read of that work effort, staff remain available to answer those thoughts. Thanks.

Any other questions on the roles and responsibilities? I should really stress this is one of the best opportunities to get in and drive genuine change at ICANN. You are able to get in, influence, share things directly. And if you are genuinely interested in these issues, that is the best thing for yourself as a GAC member, but also the GAC more broadly. I really encourage the GAC to get involved in work efforts so it doesn't fall on the same handful of GAC members every time. Jorge, please.

JORGE CANCIO Thank you, Ian. Jorge Cancio, Switzerland, for the record. It is a bit loud. Just wanted to stress that point, especially for our newer GAC colleagues, that it is a very important opportunity both to work in internal GAC working groups or small teams or ad hoc groups, because you get to know the substance much better, and also your colleagues and build a network, and also the possibility of working in PDP working groups in the wider ICANN community or in IRTs and implementation review teams.

It is very important, not only because of the experience you get, but also because you can have a direct impact on the results of what ICANN is doing. Just to break that misconception that the work ends in the doors of the GAC room. If you are working in the ICANN community and you want to have an impact, it is important to

engage beyond the GAC room if you really want to make a difference. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON: Thank you, Jorge. We will send these opportunities around via email again, and please have a look at them and consider whether you would like to get involved. With that, perhaps we can move to our next agenda item, the operating principles. I will hand the floor to my colleague Guo Feng to take us through this work.

GUO FENG: Thank you, Ian. We will talk about the GAC Operating Principle revision. In the next few minutes, I will walk you through the slide we prepared before this meeting about this working group's work. The background is like this: at the previous ICANN meeting, this committee agreed to initiate the formal revision process for the proposed administrative amendments to our GAC Operating Principle. Our proposed amendments are intended to improve clarity, consistency, and alignment with the current GAC practice and the references. All of those changes are editorial and administrative.

Now at this meeting, the proposal completed the required 60-day consultation period. No further comments regarding the administrative amendments were received beyond feedback submitted in June. But we do have substantive feedbacks. However, we will handle those issues in our next phase. The

broader substantive issues raised in the previous month will be discussed and retained for the working group's next phase of work.

At this meeting during ICANN87, I think our objective is to consider that proposal and vote for or against the proposed administrative amendments according to our operating principle, specifically according to Principle 53. Next, please. As shown on screen, this is our Operating Principles revision process.

We have three steps. The first step is to kicking off the start, which we have done it in our previous ICANN meeting. And the second step is the 60-day consultation phase. During this, GAC members invited to review and provide comments. And we also completed this step. And at this meeting, it is our third step. It is for the committee to initiate voting for or against this proposal.

Next slide, please. As I quickly walk through the previous slide deck, next, please. Are there any final questions or comments or reactions regarding the proposed administrative amendments or the revision process? At this stage, the proposed action is first to vote for or against the proposed administrative amendments to our GAC OP. And the proposal before us is unchanged from the version that completed the 60-day consultation period.

And I am not sure whether we have a further slide. This is or this is last? Okay, all right. Yes. Regarding the vote on the proposed amendments, the GAC members are invited to vote for or against the proposed administrative changes of our GAC OP. Perhaps the

procedure is we are going to ask Nico to initiate the action. Okay, thank you. And I am going to pass the floor back to Ian.

IAN SHELDON

Thank you, Guo Feng. Nico has asked me to chair this, and he has delegated the responsibility for calling this vote, as is his ability, to one of the vice-chairs, presently that is myself. Before we do call for a vote, I do want to pause briefly to see if there are any questions or final thoughts on the amendments.

Again, I am hoping you have had ample time to consider these. They are administrative changes, modernization to language, and I am genuinely hoping this is a non-controversial GAC decision. With that, I would like to call for a vote for adoption of the proposed administrative amendments to the GAC Operating Principles.

Is there a second? Jorge, thank you. The vote is quite simple. Can I please have a show of hands from those in the room if you would like to vote in favor of the proposed amendments? And just give staff a second to see those hands. Are we good to move on, Benedetta? Anybody against those amendments? Sorry, was that a hand? Was that a vote?

ANA NEVES

I think everything is fine. We were just wondering what we are really voting for. I know that is something that we have discussed earlier, but still I think that it will be good if we could have a

document, something to know exactly what we are voting for at this stage. Sorry. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON

Okay. Having just called and carried out the vote, I have had a request to have a look at the specific amendments. Are we able to briefly run through these?

They are things changing the numbering of the operating principles, changing the way we talk about secretariat, support staff, they are things changing the way we talk about references to other documents. They are really quite procedural. But I might just pause to see if we can very briefly run through them if it is a point of contention. Give me a second. Sorry, while we organize ourselves, Denmark, did you want to take the floor?

FINN PETERSEN

Yes, sorry, Finn Petersen from Denmark. Just I agree, we have nothing against the principle, we have been in the group before, but it would be nice on the agenda to know that we will vote and we have a document for future round. It will be much clearer because it is a summer ago and we sometimes forget the details. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON

I should also note that this was in the briefing. And we had circulated it repeatedly via email. There has to be a point where I think there is an expectation that we can circulate documents via

email and GAC members are across them. But in this instance, perhaps I can ask some help from Benedetta to run us through specifically what we are talking about here.

GULTEN TEPE: Ian, this is Gulten speaking. We have Argentina in the queue. Thank you.

MARINA FLEGO EIRAS: Thank you very much. Argentina for the record. If it sheds some light, there was an email from June the 26th with the documents, the redline version and the original version.

IAN SHELDON: Thank you. Might give the floor to India, and we will move forward to the next agenda item, and then we will come back to this once we have worked out how to brief GAC members who don't read their emails. India, please.

T. SANTHOSH: Thank you, Ian. I support what Finn has mentioned here. Yes, we received the briefing documents from the GAC Secretariat, but it was not clear to what the voting has to be made. And if we click the certain links right now, it is not opening in the briefing documents sent by the GAC Secretariat.

IAN SHELDON

Let's continue with the conversation. We will return to updating the committee on the proposed changes to the operating principles. We can move forward to the continuous improvement agenda item, please. Next slide, please. Okay. I think we started some of these conversations at last meeting as well.

The Continuous Improvement Program is a community-developed framework for ICANN's SO/ACs and the NomCom to regularly consider for themselves how effectively they are working and where they can improve. This was largely seen as a positive development and certainly helps with accountability and transparency considerations.

For the GAC, this means it will be GAC-led, so this is a self-assessment. We won't be engaging any external mechanisms for this review. It will be tailored. We can adapt this approach as we see fit, including to make sure it fits with the way we specifically work. Obviously, it needs to be lightweight. The general thinking is that this would build on work already underway, and it should not substantively add to the GAC's workload.

And importantly, it will be focused. The aim is to very practically identify a number of genuine improvements that we can make. We are at the first step beyond ICANN87, which is the assessment and prioritization. I should stress that the review is not happening now, but we will be looking to kick this off from here on.

Next slide, please. The GAC already has a proposed set of criteria and indicators. This was prepared using the CIP framework, and it

was tailored to the GAC's specific circumstances. The first task is to review and refine this proposed assessment approach, involving four simple steps in the intersessional period until ICANN88.

We will need to review the assessment approach, so that includes a confirmation that the proposed criteria and indicators are appropriate and proportionate. We will then need to review what we already know, using existing GAC plans, reporting, and other available information to fill in a starting point. We will then next need to identify possible improvements, so this includes reviewing existing initiatives and identify areas where the GAC could further improve its effectiveness.

And finally, we will need to prioritize that work and sensibly work out what we take forward and where we can make genuine improvement. The goal for ICANN88, we will have an agreed assessment framework, which includes criteria and indicators, and a tailored, very focused set of priorities to consider for improvement as part of the first CIP cycle. Next slide, please. I think that is it. Any questions on that work?

All other parts of the ICANN community are undertaking their own version of this and interpreting this in their own way. And I think this is an important step in showing that we continue to engage in these processes in good faith and can remain critical of our own work.

Importantly, this needs to fit with the way that we work. It needs to fit with the way that the GAC understands issues and works

through our own processes. And I think this could be genuinely effective and useful for the GAC as an exercise. Any questions on this proposed way forward? Christine, please.

CHRISTINE ARIDA

Thank you very much. Christine Arida, Egypt, for the record. I think my question is regarding the CIP because I know that the GAC is doing that on a voluntary basis. It is not something that we are doing as per the bylaws. And I know also with the review, and I am not an expert here, that there are changes that might be proposed to the bylaws maybe. Is this something that might lead into the GAC being subject to doing CIPs, or will this continue voluntary?

And if there is some disclaimer that we need to put somewhere or something that we say while we are doing that, I think we should do that. And again, I stand to be corrected, maybe there is something that I am not getting.

IAN SHELDON

Not to put you on the spot, Manal, but I don't know if you had any thoughts on this as part of the broader CIP work at all? My understanding was that this was indeed voluntary for the GAC, but I haven't been following this as closely as perhaps you might have been.

MANAL ISMAIL

No, actually, the CIP is a pilot. It is not something that the review of reviews is looking into. But when we tried to discuss this within

the GAC, it was mentioned that it is voluntary. But I have to say, this is not the perception of others in the community. They felt that CIP is CIP for everyone, and everyone is participating, so it goes without saying that everyone has the same mandate to report back on what they have done and so on. Again, it is a pilot, and within the review of reviews, it says a one-time review.

But again, as Christine mentioned, I think we need to be clear if we are doing this voluntarily, then I think we need to be clear in that as well. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON: Thank you. I think we can certainly express that view in the final product we put together. Benjamin.

BENJAMIN HARBICH: Hello. I would like to make a comment on the first subject of the session. So if you want to finish the subject you are talking about, no problem, and you can come back to me, or should I go on?

IAN SHELDON: Sorry, did you want to return to the first topic we talked about in this?

BENJAMIN HARBICH: Yes. About the job opening, let's call it, yeah.

IAN SHELDON Okay, let's finish this, and we can return to that. Thank you.

BENJAMIN HARBICH No problem.

IAN SHELDON Any other thoughts on the CIP work? I see no hands. Perhaps we can kick off some of this work, make sure the GAC's views are properly captured, including the voluntary nature, and certainly you will have opportunity to comment and take part in this work effort intersessionally.

Perhaps we can move on to the next agenda item. Annual plan, stocktake, and lessons for the next cycle. As many of you know, the GAC undertakes a routine planning work to set out what is important to us, how we go about that work, make sure some of those roles and responsibilities are articulated, and then it is routinely revisited and endorsed by the committee. Next slide, please.

A brief reminder of this planning approach. We have strategic objectives, which inform the expected outcomes, which give rise to the action items. And each step feeds into the next, and we look at these on a routine basis to make sure that we have both long, mid, and short-term perspectives integrated into our forward planning.

Next slide, please. Again, I am hoping these are documents that you are all familiar with: both the Strategic Plan, which was for the 2024 to 2028 cycle, as well as the Annual Plan, which takes us

through more specifically what we do on a year-by-year basis. Do let me know if you would like those documents recirculated via email again.

Next slide, please. Running through this very briefly, we have a range of caretakers across leadership who are responsible for driving some of this work forward and making sure that progress continues to be made across each of these nine priorities, including role for governments in ICANN, effectiveness of the GAC, future round of new gTLDs, DNS abuse, domain registration data, Universal Acceptance, new technology, internet governance awareness, and internet number resources.

Next slide, please. This is, again, hoping this is familiar to you all, a bit of a status snapshot for each of the priority areas where we have started work, where they have been finished or wrapped up, and where we perhaps haven't kicked off any initiatives either. You will see that we are on track for the good majority of them, but they continue to be a handful of these which we have just not had an opportunity to start for various reasons. Ashwin.

ASHWIN SASONGKO SASTROSUBROTO: Sorry, actually, I want to ask for the slide 18, just before this.

IAN SHELDON: Sorry, did you want the link? This one?

ASHWIN SASONGKO SASTROSUBROTO: Yeah. The GAC Annual Plan. My question is whether it is focused only on internet-related or internet only, or including also other internet-related? For example, give the new technology. Is it the technology for the internet, for example, IP addresses, AS number, things that, or also related to internet, for example, the content, content provider, content applications for playing on the internet?

IAN SHELDON: This is the annual plan for the GAC, and a lot of the remit here is bound by what we do and don't work on here at ICANN. And so really this is focused on how the GAC might want to influence a range of these within the remit of ICANN. It doesn't stray into broader digital regulation issues or some of those broader challenges. It is quite specific to the work of the GAC. Does that answer your question? Or you think perhaps there are other things the GAC should be focusing on?

ASHWIN SASONGKO SASTROSUBROTO: Because this is I think it will be depended on the further discussion, because new technology, you have new technology in the telecommunication sector, you have new technology in the applications, and so on and so on. Perhaps I propose that will be later be that, and we will go further into the discussion, because I am not sure about the new technology later next year, for example,

and we will see better for that during the discussion for each of the topics.

IAN SHELDON Yeah. Perhaps we can move to slide 20, and I can talk about the opportunities to influence this piece of work. The plan here is that we start with topic leads and integrate perspectives from the broader GAC. The plan will be sent out again via email, and you will have opportunity to review and provide thoughts.

And again, we very much lean on the topic leads. Coming back to the first discussion we had, if there is keen interest in shaping up some of these things, you are welcome to volunteer for some of those topic lead roles and shoulder more of the responsibility in helping shape up the work of the GAC in that regard.

Once we have had input from the topic leads as well as broader GAC input, it moves to GAC leadership review, where we look to balance some of this work, realistically work out what the GAC can be responsible for, how much we sensibly think we can accomplish over the next year. And then we look to work with the topic leads again to finalize some of this and then put it back out to GAC review, hoping we can endorse this at ICANN88. And the point I would very much like to stress here is that there is going to be a lot on over the next year.

And I think we need to be very prudent in what we can accomplish, what we want to prioritize, and perhaps what issues we want to

keep a watching brief on. So when we move to thinking about what this plan looks like going forward, I would very much stress prudence and conservatism.

Coming back to the first discussion, there are a small number of GAC who get involved in work efforts. And so this means that the engine that the GAC has available to provide power to the GAC's work across the ICANN community is going to be constrained. It is not as large as perhaps we would like it to be.

If there are more things you would think the GAC should be getting involved in, then of course I am going to turn around and ask you whether you would like to get involved in those work efforts and volunteer for those initiatives yourself as well. We have finite resources and we have finite bandwidth.

Any other questions on the annual plan? Christine. Is that an old hand, Ashwin? I will assume it is an old hand. Christine, please.

CHRISTINE ARIDA Thank you. Christine Arida, for the record. I know that capacity development is part of some of the strategic objectives within the annual plan. And as we have discussed during the first capacity development session, the newly formed Capacity Development Working Group has the mandate to actually align activities with the plan so that they are really serving what we as GAC are looking at as priorities of our work.

I think what I would like us to see in the next plan, maybe to have capacity development cross-cutting in every single one of the different topics, in terms of priorities being set for it, identifying gaps, maybe, but also maybe until we finish this cycle, try to work on that specific issue of capacity development within where it is listed in the action plan, closely with the Capacity Development Working Group so that we can connect the dots. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON

Thank you. That sounds very sensible. Any other comments or questions before we circle back to the beginning of the document? And I think we are now ready to show the redline version of the operating principles. Okay. Could we make that a little larger, please?

There is some textual amendments to help clarify some of the intent. There is renumbering of paragraphs. There was some work here to reorder some of the sections here as well. Specific references back out to other GAC documents, including the ccTLD one.

Bringing a little bit more specificity in footnoting what we are referring to. Specific reference to other parts of the document, including additional language for clarity, updating numbered references to other principles. There is some clarity included here around our voting processes. Updated numbering.

Improvements here to talk about support staff rather than secretariat. Again, more numbering improvements. And that is it. That is the end. Those are the changes that you have all just voted on. Any concerns? Any other questions? I will take that to mean that these changes have been voted on and adopted by the GAC. Thank you.

And finally, I will return to Benjamin's request. Perhaps we can move back to the first agenda item on opportunities for the GAC to get involved in work. Could we move back to slide 5, please?

BENJAMIN HARBICH: Thank you very much. Concerning those opportunities for involvement, I think it might be, let's say, beneficial for people that are maybe a bit hesitant to give a brief description, might it be on the theme or the investment necessary, I don't know, maybe one meeting a week or a month or a year, so that in a quick view, I can see, okay, that is maybe possible or not.

Information is available, but for, let's say, attracting people that are hesitant, I think displaying it would be a good motivator. And through exchange with, for example, my colleague Jorge, I have a better grasp on some things, but not all. That was my comment about that. Thank you.

IAN SHELDON: Thank you. I think that is a good recommendation. I had similar questions before I volunteered for the ccNSO liaison point. And I

remember having distinct conversations with Rob at the time about how much was involved. We can try and capture a bit of thinking in a consolidated way and make sure that is circulated back out to the committee so you can make an informed decision about how much capacity might be needed for each of these work efforts.

Any other questions? Any questions about anything else we have discussed across this session this afternoon? I see none. I think that concludes our operating discussion. So with that, perhaps we can move to an early coffee break. Please be back in this room at 3:00 p.m. for our meeting with the GNSO. Thanks, all.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]