

Chair's Summary of the Seminar
“The Internet and the post-WSIS environment: enhancing dialogue among the stakeholders”
Riga, Latvia October 4, 2006

The seminar “The Internet and the post-WSIS environment: enhancing dialogue among the stakeholders”, co-organized by the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Electronic Government Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and supported by the Finnish Presidency of the European Union, took place in Riga on October 4th, 2006. Over 100 participants, from more than 20 countries around the Baltic Sea and Eastern Europe, representing governments, country code domain registries, Internet Service Providers and end-users, gathered to discuss Internet Governance related matters. The Latvian Minister of Special Assignments for Electronic Government Affairs, Ms. Ina Gudele, addressed the participants with an opening presentation.

The seminar aimed at bringing together representatives of different stakeholder groups from countries active in the global debate on Internet Governance related issues with countries which have been “quasi-absent” from this debate in order to compare perspectives on the issue. The key objective of the seminar was to exchange views on ICANN related matters: IANA services for ccTLD operators, WHOIS, IDN, migration from IPv4 to IPv6 and network security as well as to encourage Eastern European countries to consider participation in relevant ICANN supporting organizations and advisory committees, including the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC).

This multi-stakeholder seminar addressed a range of issues deriving from the World Summit on Information Society and should be seen as a sub-regional preparatory meeting to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which will take place in Athens from 30th October until 2nd November 2006. The seminar was structured into three substantive sessions: 1) discussion of the state of global Internet Governance; 2) presentation of ICANN's functions; 3) presentation of upcoming technical challenges.

The Riga seminar was the first international gathering after the signing of the Joint Project Agreement between ICANN and the US Department of Commerce. A promise to facilitate effective consideration by ICANN of GAC's advice on public policy aspects of technical coordination of the Internet DNS was welcomed. Speakers, including the Finnish Presidency of the European Union represented by Ambassador Yrjo Lansipuro, gave a positive preliminary evaluation of the terms of the new agreement. The Ambassador reiterated the specific nature of the Internet by stating that “The Internet is fundamentally different from anything else we have known before. That's why there are no ready-made models for its governance. Nor can we just invent a theoretical construction and set it up as a goal to be achieved. That's why we in Finland believe in step-by step evolution based on whatever firm ground we can find today under our feet”. A discussion on the necessary regulatory framework highlighted the advantages of the Internet's self-regulatory nature, but indicated a need for soft regulations on certain issues.

ICANN Board member, Mr. Hagen Hultsch, gave a comprehensive overview of ICANN's activities and challenges in the technical management of the Domain Name System. It was complemented by a detailed presentation of the IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority) function which is performed by ICANN. Different perspectives of engagement with ICANN and the local Internet community were given by Ms. Emily Taylor from Nominet, the .uk registry operator, Ms. Daiva Tamulioniene from .lt registry and Ms. Katrina Sataki from .lv registry.

Challenges regarding the introduction of international domain names, including in Cyrillic, were explained by Mr. Cary Karp, member of the ICANN IDN President Advisory Committee, and Mr. Kim Davies from ICANN. The security challenges of interconnected networks and possible courses of concerted actions were illustrated by Mr. Arkady Kremer from Russia. Mr. Christoffer Karsberg and Mr. Anders Rafting shared with participants the conclusions of a recent study regarding how to improve Internet security in Sweden.

The main conclusions of the discussions were the following:

- The preliminary assessment of the post-MoU arrangement between ICANN and the US Department of Commerce was positive as it creates the necessary conditions for increased transparency, accountability, multi-stakeholder participation, progress towards an international and independent structure, while, at the same time, ensuring the security and stability of Internet to the benefit of all.
- ICANN's outreach to different Internet stakeholders in Eastern Europe is supported by the WSIS call for continuous dialogue on Internet governance related issues and the approach should be continued in other locations around the world.
- Country code domain registries acknowledged added value in joining accountability framework agreements with ICANN and participating in ICANN's Country Code Name Supporting Organizations (ccNSO) in addition to participating in regional umbrella organizations of registry operators, like the Council of European National Top Level Domain Registries (CENTR).
- Internet providers are interested in the security and stability of the Internet, in its efficient functioning and in assuring a prompt response to emerging needs on the regional level.
- The introduction of internationalized domain names (IDN) will enormously benefit Internet users around the world, will build on the importance of developing local language content, and requires well-timed preparations at multiple levels.

All the presentations and the workshop materials are now available at: <http://www.eps.gov.lv/index.php?&258>