ICANN Strategic Planning Issues Paper
September 2005

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:
- Identify major issues that were raised during the strategic planning consultation in Luxembourg, on the on-line forum and in comments from Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees
- Summarise points of view of members of the community about these issues
- Encourage further debate in the community about key issues
- Describe next steps for adequately addressing these issues in the next version of the strategic plan

The process so far

In 2004, ICANN developed its first draft strategic plan. The document and the process drew a large amount of interest from the community.

Much has been learned about the planning process from that exercise. Feedback on the plan (format, use of metrics, separation of strategic and operational components) and the consultation process (timing, need for multiple languages, closer involvement of supporting organizations and advisory committees, involvement of all members and potential members of the ICANN community) were received as part of the more general consultation on the strategic plan and more specifically at a public forum in Mar del Plata.

As a result of that feedback, the ICANN planning process was split in two, with the first half of the year (July to December) being spent on a strategic planning and the second half of the year on operational planning. A strategic planning process was developed that addressed the issues that were raised in the feedback and, in particular, sought the views of the community at the beginning of the process.

At the Luxembourg meeting, ICANN conducted a number of consultation sessions seeking the views of the community on the July 2006 - June 2009 Strategic Plan. Sessions were run for Supporting Organisations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs) and other constituency groups. General consultation sessions were conducted in English, French and Spanish. The raw output from these sessions can be found on the ICANN website (http://www.icann.org/strategic-plan/consultation-process-LUX/output.pdf).

In the session on strategic planning at the Luxembourg meeting, members of the community raised additional questions that they wanted the community to consider. These questions and the original questions that were used for the consultation sessions in Luxembourg were posted on the ICANN website in English, Spanish and French. No comments were received regarding any of the questions.

Since the Luxembourg meeting, an additional response was received from SSAC. Relevant content related comments from all consultation sessions have been incorporated into this paper.

General comments

This paper is being produced at an early stage of the planning process. It represents the views of members of the community and is designed to promote dialogue within the ICANN community. It does not represent any final views; all issues are open for discussion and debate.

The issues discussed here are issues of content not of format. Format comments have been noted and will be incorporated into the strategic plan document released later in the year.

Specific comments about wording of the previous draft strategic plan have also been noted. As it is anticipated that the 2006-2009 strategic plan will be a significantly different document (rather than a revision of the previous plan), those concerns are not addressed here, except where the wording comments had implications for content.

In addition to the description of the process so far and the next steps that need to be taken, this paper falls into two parts:
- an attempt to set out the major factors that might shape the environment during the period of this plan and the opportunities and challenges that this environment might provide for ICANN, and
- a synthesis of the community's views on the priorities that need to be established and the strategic actions that need to be taken to address these opportunities and challenges in the next version of the strategic plan.

All of the issues raised below need to be considered in the light of the ICANN Mission and Values.

Major Factors

Any strategic plan is, by its nature, about the future. The ICANN strategic plan needs to set out the future that ICANN wants to create in the context of the factors that will shape the environment in which ICANN operates.

As part of the consultation process, members of the community were asked about the factors that they thought would have a significant impact on ICANN over the next three to five years. The major factors that were identified were:
- IDN.IDN and other developments to facilitate multi-language communication
- Introduction of new gTLDs
- IPv6
- DNSSEC
- enum
- Internet security (from both a user and a government perspective)
- Actions by governments

- WSIS, WGIG
- Increasing importance of participation by the global community in the policy development of the DNS
- The future of the MOU or other contractual agreements with the US DOC

These factors raise a number of opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed by ICANN in its planning process.

- The continued rise of the Internet as a truly global means of communication and the need for ICANN to meet the needs of a truly global stakeholder base
- Ensuring stability and security in an environment of increased threats
- Maintaining stability given expected increases in scale driven by the number of devices using the Internet and the number of users
- Multiple complicated changes to Internet operations or protocols that need to be managed in parallel, including possible paradigm changes not yet anticipated
- Possible fracturing of the current system perhaps brought about by some users becoming dissatisfied with perceived restrictions imposed by technical protocols or by actions of a government or governments
- ICANN taking an appropriate role in the further evolution of the broad group of international entities involved in Internet co-ordination
- Designing appropriate structures and processes for a post-MOU ICANN

Major issues that need to be considered in the 2006-2009 strategic plan

This section is a synthesis of the community's views on the priorities that need to be established and the strategic actions that need to be taken in response to the opportunities and challenges that they expect the future will bring.

Internationalization

Internationalization is an important aspect of ICANN's strategic planning for two major reasons. First, the continued rise of the Internet as a truly global means of communication will place demands on ICANN to encourage all relevant parties to take part in the ICANN process and also to accommodate all Internet users as members of the ICANN community. Second, as the broad group of international entities involved in Internet co-ordination evolves, ICANN will need to demonstrate its truly global representative nature in order to maintain its legitimacy.

Members of the community suggest that the demands on ICANN to encourage all relevant parties to take part in the ICANN process and also to accommodate all Internet users as members of the ICANN community have a number of implications.

- Many see outreach as an important part of the move to a more internationalized ICANN. This is particularly important if all countries are to be included under the ICANN umbrella.
- Some believe ICANN should be doing more to assist the development of Internet communities in developing countries.

- For some, the most effective way to achieve this objective is to develop a number of regional presences that would improve ICANN's capability for outreach and also assist in making ICANN business processes more accessible by providing "in the same time zone" service. It would also bring a knowledge of local laws, culture and context to ICANN processes. Building capability in local communities would be more easily achieved through regional presences. These regional presences might be a permanent structural solution, or, in the eyes of others, a temporary solution to be put in place until all relevant parties are participating fully in the ICANN process. Others are not in favour of regional presences and in particular caution that any ICANN regional activity should not duplicate resources that already exist (e.g., ISOC, CENTR, ccTLD resources).
- ICANN's communication and meeting practices need to become more international, especially by broadening of the use of languages other than English for key documents and other communication. The provision of forums in French and Spanish at the Luxembourg meeting was very well received, and participants at these sessions encouraged the continuation of opportunities to work in their native language. While many agreed that translation was important, there was no clear consensus on which documents should be translated, nor which languages should be used.
- In addition to providing multi-lingual forums and documents, the online tools that ICANN makes available for problem reporting and the IANA function should be made available in several languages.
- ICANN's business processes need to move to a more international framework, reaching beyond the translation of documents to the acceptance of a broad range of business cultures and practices to ensure a level playing field for people across the globe. Many from outside North America and Western Europe feel that some ICANN processes (e.g., new TLD applications) favour those who are familiar with working in English in an American business/ legal framework. This needs to be changed if ICANN is to become more truly international.
- On a similar note, some were of the opinion that ICANN needs to have less of a "US focus" in its culture and processes, with some suggesting that it needs to move away from being a US company.
- Many were of the view that ICANN should be working to bring all ccTLDs "into the fold."
- There were no voices speaking against internationalization, but silence may not mean universal agreement.

ICANN should take an appropriate role in the further evolution of the broad group of international entities involved in Internet co-ordination. Members of the community believe that it will need to demonstrate and enhance its truly global representative nature if it is to maintain its legitimacy.
- ICANN needs to improve its relationships with other international entities and where possible, work with them to solve problems that affect Internet users.
- Internationalization is a crucial component for raising ICANN's international legitimacy.
- It is likely that the need for effective relationships with other entities will increase over the coming years.

Budget and finance

The consultation process was not designed to provide specific guidance about the allocation of the budget. However, there were some strong views about the more general aspects of the budget.

- There was a strong view that ICANN needs a stable budget if it is to achieve its mission and that the current budget structure and process need to be improved.
- Diversification of revenue streams is necessary for this stability in the future.
- Many were of the view that there needs to clearer links between project spending and measurable project outcomes. This would facilitate greater accountability. There was also an acknowledgement that it is impossible to allocate all of the budget on a project basis at the start of the year as the nature of the ICANN environment means that there is always a significant amount of each year's budget that needs to be spent on items that could not have been anticipated at the beginning of the year.
- There were differing opinions about the size of budget required to fulfil ICANN's mission with some believing that a larger budget is required, others believing the budget is already too big.

Operational improvements

Particularly from those who have strong interest (often from a commercial perspective) in the operational aspects of ICANN, there were fairly consistent messages that improvements were needed.

- Implementation of a program targeting monitoring and enforcing of compliance, particularly around contractual agreements is a high priority.
- Many suggested that Service Level Agreements were needed so that appropriate levels of service could be negotiated and service levels could be measured against these agreed standards.
- IANA was mentioned often as one area where improvement was needed.
- Some expressed the view that ICANN should put in place 24/7 emergency processes for key services.

Improving security and stability of the Internet

Security and stability came up in almost every consultation session and is a very important concern for members of the ICANN community.

- Many were concerned about the impact of increased demand on the stability of the infrastructure of the Internet. This will be driven both by an increase in the number of users and an increase in the number of devices using the Internet.
- There were also concerns about the increasing levels of threats to the infrastructure of the Internet and to users of the Internet.
- Others had a concern for the protection of the Root Server system itself, suggesting that a plan is needed for improving the redundancy for distribution

of the root zone. A review should be undertaken (possibly with outside assistance) to determine how or whether root zone management might be externally managed (ie outsourced).

There are a number of important technical changes that will take place during the life of this strategic plan. Some are well scoped and already underway. Others are still in the early stages of discussion. In addition, there will probably be other as yet unidentified changes made necessary by the increased volume of traffic on the Internet or by developments in technology. Technical changes that were identified during the consultation process as important were:
- Implementation of IPv6
- Implementation of IDN.IDN
- Implementation of DNSSEC

The major concerns of participants were:
- The risks associated with multiple complicated changes to Internet operations or protocols that need to be managed in parallel.
- The need to educate the community on the impact of these changes on Internet operations.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the issues involved with each of these implementation. Those who are interested should participate in the relevant discussion through the ICANN community and other forums.

Introduction of new TLDs

The introduction of new TLDs was raised in a number of the consultation sessions and for a variety of reasons.
- Efficient implementation seen by some as important for the internationalization of ICANN, particularly when combined with IDNs. IDNs will increase demand for TLDs and it is important that ICANN is seen to be delivering on this aspect of its commitments to the global community.
- New TLDs are seen by others as important for the establishment of local communities, and this is valuable because it is seen as giving more voice to end users in those communities.
- Others see efficient implementation of new TLDs as critical for the facilitation of competition and consumer choice
- There was a strong body of opinion that an agreed process for introducing new TLDs was needed.
- Many feel that many more new TLDs should be introduced quickly.

Competition and Choice

As was identified in the first planning process, there is a lot of interest in and discussion of competition and choice, but a lack of clarity (or at least shared understanding) about what competition and choice actually mean in the ICANN context.

- For some, competition means letting the market determine what should happen. For example, allow many more TLDs and let the market decide whether they are sustainable. If some fail, so be it. From their perspective, consumer protection is not in ICANN's mission. Over-regulation is stifling innovation.
- Others see competition as valuable in as much as it provides benefits to Internet users, not as an end in itself. The need to provide stability is more important, suggesting that the freedom of the market needs to be moderated by the need to provide protection for end users.

Improving ICANN processes

In addition to the operational improvements discussed above, some participants raised issues about policy and other working practices and processes.
- Cross-constituency interaction and problem solving needs to be improved.
- There is a need to address limitations of the current "bottom up" policy development process and problems that arise when "special interest groups" make it impossible to resolve issues that affect multiple segments of the community.
- Action needs to be taken to broaden stakeholder participation to ensure that ICANN remains a valid and valuable forum for all users of the Internet. The hiring of a Manager Public Participation was seen by some as a crucial step in achieving this.
- An important consequence of these actions would be to maintain and develop the cohesion of the ICANN community and the validity of ICANN as the forum for discussing issues and developing policy on areas within its mission.
- Communication needs to be improved, and, in particular, the ICANN website needs a major overhaul so that it is more accessible for everyone who might have an interest in issues that are discussed within the ICANN community.

Designing appropriate structures and processes for a post-MOU ICANN

The need to prepare for a post-MOU ICANN was identified as an important issue during the development of the first draft strategic plan. However, at the more recent consultation sessions, it was raised only a few times. Even then, little more was said other than recognising that it was an issue that the community needed to discuss and deal with.

Next steps

This issues document will be sent to the Supporting Organizations (SOs) and Advisory Committees (ACs) so that they can review the issues raised by the community and make whatever comments they feel are useful in the context of preparing the strategic plan.

In addition, the document will be posted on the ICANN website in English, French and Spanish and members of the community will be encouraged to make comments through the on-line forum.

Based on the feedback that is received from the SOs, ACs and other members of the community, a key priorities document will be prepared. This will be a short document that sets out the proposed major areas of strategic focus for ICANN over the next three years. The key priorities document will be distributed to the SOs and ACs and published on the ICANN website. Subject to comments from the SOs, ACs and members of the community, these priorities will form the basis of the strategic plan to be prepared and distributed in November for discussion at the Vancouver meeting.

It is hoped that the strategic plan can be approved by the Board at the January meeting.