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**TOP STORY**

Register Now for the Middle East DNS Forum in Saudi Arabia

The seventh Middle East DNS Forum (MEDNSF) will take place on 24-25 March 2020 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Organized by ICANN, the Forum's local host is the Saudi Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC). The agenda features a variety of panel discussions and presentations covering topics of interest to the regional community aimed at unlocking the full potential of the DNS industry in the Middle East.

For more information and registration details, visit the MEDNSF event page here.

**SPOTLIGHT**

ICANN Seeks Public Comment on Proposed Amendment 3 to the .COM Registry Agreement

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and VeriSign, Inc. (Verisign), the registry operator of the .COM top-level domain (TLD) announced that they have reached a proposed agreement to amend the .COM Registry Agreement (RA). In addition, ICANN and Verisign announced a new proposed framework for working together on initiatives related to the security, stability, and resiliency of the Domain Name System (DNS) in the form of a binding Letter of
ICANN org is seeking public comment on the proposed Amendment No. 3 to the .COM registry agreement between ICANN and VeriSign. Read the details and post your public comment submission on or before 14 February 2020 [here](#).

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**Evolving ICANN’s Multistakeholder Model: The Work Plan and Way Forward**

By Brian Cute

Over the years, ICANN's multistakeholder model (MSM) has evolved, addressed important issues, and developed policies for the Internet's domain name and numbering resources. During the development of ICANN's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025, the ICANN community raised a number of challenges concerning its effectiveness, efficiency, and overall functioning. That community feedback was the basis for development of the strategic objective on governance, which led to the Evolving ICANN's MSM process.

Read Brian's full blog on the work plan and next steps [here](#).

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**Meet the First Alumni of the Winter School on Internet Governance, Digital Policies, and Innovation**

The first edition of the Winter School of Internet Governance, Digital Policies, and Innovation (SIDI) was held in Bucharest, Romania, from 9 to 13 December. Participants from 15 countries took part, studying a curriculum that tackled the complex dimensions of Internet Governance. Hosted by the National School of Political Science and Public Administration (SNSPA), the School was organized by ICANN, the Internet Society, and SNSPA. It was supported by several local and regional institutions listed [here](#).

ICANN org's Patrick Jones, Nigel Hickson, and Andrea Beccalli were among the lecturers. They addressed the different functions of ICANN including Domain Name System, cybersecurity, the multistakeholder model, and ICANN's role in global Internet governance.

The participants received an SNSPA certificate from the program and 3 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits. Meet the Class of 2019 [here](#), and read more about the School [here](#).
Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Looking Back on 2019 and Planning for 2020

In the Eastern Europe and Central Asian region, 2019 was full of engagement activities. Working together with our stakeholders, we focused on the development of both the technical and policy aspects of the DNS ecosystem and fostered regional participation in ICANN and its policymaking processes.

Read more in this blog by Natalia Mochu, Global Stakeholder Engagement Manager in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
One of ICANN's key objectives is technical capacity development, which includes hosting workshops on DNS operations, DNSSEC, DNS abuse and misuse, and more. In November, ICANN teams focused on numerous engagement activities with the technical communities in Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates.

**DNS Security and Stability on the Agenda in Turkey**

ICANN's Chief Technology Officer David Conrad was featured at two key industry events in Istanbul, Turkey: Tech Talk with local stakeholders in ICANN's Istanbul regional office on 20 November, and the ICT Summit, where he gave a keynote speech titled "Maintaining the Security and Stability of the Internet's System of Unique Identifiers" on 21 November. During Tech Talk, Conrad discussed recent developments in the DNS security to a small group from Internet service providers, registry operators, registrars, and the Turkish telecom regulator. Conrad's keynote at the ICT Summit also focused on DNS security with references to the recent cyberattacks and threats. He elaborated on some of the most common techniques used by attackers to compromise the DNS and explained how DNS Security Extensions (DNSSEC) can help mitigate some of these issues.

**ICANN Org at GSMA Mobile 360 MENA in Dubai**

ICANN org participated in the GSMA Mobile 360 MENA held in Dubai, UAE on 26-27 November. This regional GSM Association event for the Middle East and North Africa region featured participation from telecom operators, vendors, and consultants. ICANN's Vice President of Global Stakeholder Engagement in the Middle East, Baher Esmat spoke in the session "Connectivity is a basic need, but what about data privacy?" The session focused on the security of Internet of Things (IoT). Esma's talk leveraged a report from ICANN's Security and Stability Advisory Committee, the SAC105 Report, to shed light on the opportunities and risks that IoT represents to the DNS. In February 2018, ICANN signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the GSMA to enhance collaboration and raise awareness on issues of interest to both organizations and their respective audiences. This event offered ICANN an opportunity to engage with the key telecom players in the region and raise awareness about key DNS security developments.

**Technical Capacity Development Tour in the Gulf**

Throughout November and December, ICANN org hosted a number of technical workshops across the Gulf region. The events began in Doha, Qatar, with a one day workshop titled "Handling Internet Identifiers Abuse and Misuse" and a three day DNSSEC workshop. Both workshops were hosted by the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) of Qatar, with each one attracting around 20 participants.

The next stop was Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where 40 participants attended the DNSSEC workshop and 50 attended the Identifier Abuse and Misuse workshop. Both were hosted by the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) of Saudi Arabia.

The last stop was Dubai, UAE. Hosted by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) of the UAE, 40 participants took part in the Identifier Abuse and Misuse workshop.

**ICANN Supports and Participates in AFRINIC31**

AFRINIC-31 took place from 2-6 December in Luanda, Angola. The audience included newcomers, who were briefed on the Internet and the ICANN ecosystem. The meeting also gave ICANN org the opportunity to raise awareness around Universal Acceptance.

ICANN org in Africa participated in the event and gave financial support as a silver sponsor. The event was hosted by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology of Angola (MTTI) in collaboration with Angolan Internet Service Providers Association (AAPSI).
AFRICOMM 2019 Takes Place in Benin

AFRICOMM 2019, the 11th European Alliance for Innovation (EAI) International Conference on e-Infrastructure and e-Services for Developing Countries, took place on 3-4 December in Porto-Novo, Benin. ICANN's Pierre Dandjinou delivered the keynote address on "The DNS: Technology, Economics, and Governance."

The conference attracted over 75 scientists and researchers from ten countries and territories, including seven African countries (South Africa, Cameroon, Gabon, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Benin), Europe, and Canada.

The aim of AFRICOMM is to present selected papers from researchers and scientists, with a focus on emerging technologies, cybersecurity, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and 5G. It also seeks to provide expert insights on issues raised by the technology and the uptake by developing countries.

African Cybercrime Unit Leaders Meet

ICANN org participated in the sixth Africa Regional Workshop for Heads of Cybercrime Units, organized by INTERPOL and hosted by the Kenya Police in Nairobi, Kenya. This annual event brings together the heads of cybercrime units within the African law enforcement agencies (LEAs), mainly police or criminal investigation units.

It is also an important platform to further ICANN org's capacity building efforts with LEAs. During the meeting, members of the ICANN org in Africa presented an introduction to ICANN's mission in ensuring the security, stability, and resiliency of the Internet's unique identifiers. The engagement was appreciated, and additional requests were received from representatives of Gambia, Nigeria, and Ghana to host ICANN workshops on DNS abuse in early 2020.

ICANN NEWS

Make Your Voice Heard on ICANN's Future!

ICANN org is seeking input and feedback from the community on the Draft FY21-FY25 Operating and Financial Plan and Draft FY21 Operating Plan and Budget.

ICANN org's FY21-25 Operating Plan and FY21 Operating Plan include descriptions of the major work ICANN org will undertake to achieve its Strategic Plan, operate the organization, and implement its mission. The FY21-25 Operating Plan projects this work over a five-year period, while the FY21 Operating Plan focuses only on the single fiscal year 2021.

The Public Comment period is now open and has been extended by 7 days to 58 days (excluding holidays) to give the community more time to review the documents. You can find the full documents and register your feedback on our Public Comment page.

Register Now for ICANN67
Register now for the ICANN67 Community Forum in Cancún, Mexico, from 7-12 March 2020. Preregistration is encouraged for all attendees. Email validation is required to complete the registration process. You can find more travel and event details on the dedicated ICANN67 website.

Register for ICANN67 Prep Week Webinars

Mark your calendars! Ahead of ICANN67, there will be a series of webinars during the week of 18-24 February 2020 to help the ICANN community prepare for Community Forum in Cancún, Mexico. Please register here by 14 February to receive your calendar invitation.

Policy Recommendations on the Retirement of ccTLDs

The Country Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO) continues the policy development process (PDP) related to the retirement of country code top-level domains (ccTLDs). This third-ever ccNSO PDP aims to develop policy recommendations for the ICANN Board, which will include a review mechanism pertaining to decision on the delegation, transfer, revocation, and retirement of ccTLDs. Volunteers are needed to launch Phase 2 of the PDP, which will aim to develop the review mechanism. A call for volunteers is scheduled to open later this month. Phase 2 work will begin after the ccNSO Council approves the roster of volunteers. During its December meeting, the ccNSO Council reviewed the timeline, including major milestones.

Policy Development for IDNs

The Country Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO) recently initiated a policy development process (PDP) on Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) country code top-level domain (ccTLD) strings. This PDP will address a limited set of issues related to the selection of IDN ccTLD strings and review the proposal to amend Article 10 of the ICANN Bylaws, which would enable IDN ccTLDs to become members of the ccNSO. The issue report and the proposed timeline are expected by the end of February 2020. A call for volunteers will open soon after. Read more about the ccNSO IDN Preliminary Review Team here.
The EPDP Team Drafts Initial Report

The Expedited Policy Development Process (EPDP) on the Temporary Specification for gTLD Registration Data Team is currently developing the final draft of its Phase 2 Initial Report. The report will include language on the development of a standardized system for the access and disclosure of nonpublic gTLD registration data (SSAD). The Initial Report will include recommendations on a number of topics related to the SSAD, including accreditation, data retention, financial considerations, and auditing. The EPDP Team expects to publish its Initial Report by 7 February 2020.

New Recommendations from the gTLD Subsequent Procedures PDP Working Group

The New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process Working Group has completed its substantive review of Public Comment submissions on its Initial Report. It has focused on refining final recommendations and other supporting content that should be included in the draft Final Report. The Final Report is also expected to include final decisions related to Work Track 5 on geographic names. A Public Comment proceeding for the draft Final Report is anticipated for early 2020. Learn more here.

Rights Protection Mechanisms PDP Working Group Approaches Publication of Phase 1 Initial Report

The Working Group for the Review of All Rights Protection Mechanisms (RPMs) in All gTLDs Policy Development Process has finished reviewing preliminary recommendations for the RPMs applicable to gTLDs launched under the 2012 New gTLD Programs. These RPMs include: the Trademark Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure (TM-PDDRP); the Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH); Sunrise and Trademark Claims services that are offered through the TMCH; and the Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS) dispute resolution procedure. The working group has started the review of the draft Initial Report, which is expected to be published for Public Comment in January 2020. Learn more here.
Post-ATLAS III Activities

In December, the Organizing Committee of the Third At-Large Summit (ATLAS III) met to discuss the next steps for post-ATLAS III activities. A post-ATLAS III webinar for the participants was held to set out priorities for the At-Large Ambassadors, including an overview of the main activities, including policy involvement, capacity building, outreach and engagement, and communication.

This month, At-Large Ambassadors began activities in their respective regions. These activities are based on the recommendations that arose from the ATLAS III survey and capacity building interviews from ATLAS III. Over the next few months, Ambassadors will build knowledge in their respective At-Large Structures (ALSes) and, once complete, leverage that knowledge to engage in local and regional activities.

As part of both post-ATLAS III activities as well as the At-Large Review Implementation, a new At-Large Structure Mobilization Working Party continues to review the criteria for ALSes with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of members.

GDD UPDATE

Universal Acceptance Continues Momentum During ICANN66

If you weren't able to join the Universal Acceptance (UA) discussions at ICANN66 in Montréal, then don't miss the latest blog by Universal Acceptance Steering Group Chair Ajay Data. The blog outlines the highlights and key takeaways from ICANN66, which include the initiation of a Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) working group focused on Universal Acceptance.

Read the blog here.

Call for EAI and Measurement Working Group Vice Chairs

Are you passionate about promoting Universal Acceptance? The UASG Email Address Internationalization (EAI) and Measurement Working Groups are in need of experienced Internet community members to serve as vice chairs. Interested? Find out more here.

Updated Domain Name Marketplace Indicators Released

ICANN has released updated industry metrics as part of its Domain Name Marketplace Indicators initiative. This initiative presents statistics related to generic top-level domains (gTLDs) and country code top-level domains (ccTLDs) that encompass the below categories:

- Robust competition: registrant choice, registrant domain adoption, service provider marketplace entry, and service provider competition.
- Marketplace stability: service provider contractual compliance.
- Trust: industry safeguards.

These metrics are published twice a year in order to track progress against ICANN's strategic goal of supporting the evolution of the domain name marketplace to be robust, stable, and trusted.
IANA Engagement Survey Results Are In

Last month, the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) published its annual Customer Engagement Survey which measures customer satisfaction with the IANA functions. Leading the survey with a rating of 4.3 (on a 5-point scale) was confidence in the IANA team's ability to achieve its objectives and also satisfaction with the transparency of the Key Signing Key ceremony.

In its sixth year, the annual survey allows the IANA team to evaluate how they manage their relationship with different user groups, and most recently, are able to identify improvements in addition to the regular operational feedback received through the post-interaction survey.

Read the announcement here and view to the IANA Customer Engagement Survey here.

Operational Improvements to the PICDRP

Following recent discussions with the gTLD Registries Stakeholder Group, the ICANN organization agreed to make operational improvements to the Public Interest Commitment Dispute Resolution Procedure (PICDRP) which increases transparency without materially changing the procedure. The PICDRP addresses complaints that a registry operator may not be complying with the Public Interest Commitment(s) in Specification 11 of their Registry Agreement.

This revised version of the PICDRP reflects the agreed upon changes and will be effective 1 February 2020. You can read more to learn about the improvements here.

Opportunities to Participate: ICANN Reviews

Specific Reviews are led by teams of community volunteers to assess the performance of the ICANN organization and make recommendations for improvement. All Specific Review team plenary meetings are open and available for observers to join. You may share your feedback and input any time to the team's public mailing list. Details of meeting schedules and mailing lists are available on the team wiki pages. Upcoming Specific Review team meetings include:

Comment on the third Accountability and Transparency Review Team (ATRT3) Draft Report

The ATRT3 seeks to solicit input on its Draft Report which contains findings, suggestions, and recommendations regarding ICANN accountability and transparency in key areas:

- Board
- Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)
- Public Input
- Policy Development Process
- Specific and Organizational Reviews
- Accountability Indicators
- Prioritization of Activities, Policies, and Recommendations

The report is available for Public Comment through 31 January 2020. Go to the Public Comment page to read the report and register your comments.
Visit the Reviews Status Update Table for the latest progress of Specific and Organizational Reviews and links to additional key resources for each.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Join ICANN at these upcoming events in the EMEA region:

- 24-27 February 2020, Mobile World Congress, Barcelona, Spain
- 19-20 March 2020, WACREN Meeting, Cotonou, Benin Republic
- 24-25 March 2020, Middle East DNS Forum, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 22-24 April 2020, OSIANE 2020, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo

Learn more about ICANN participating in regional events near you.