

Staff Report of Public Comment Proceeding

ICANN Africa Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025

Publication Date: 10 June 2020

Prepared By: Africa Global Stakeholder Engagement Team

Public Comment Proceeding

Open Date: 15 April 2020

Close Date: 27 May 2020

Staff Report
Due Date: 10 June 2020

Important Information Links

[Announcement](#)

[Public Comment Proceeding](#)

[View Comments Submitted](#)

Staff Contact: Pierre Dandjinou

Email: queries.nairobiec@ican.org

Section I: General Overview and Next Steps

The launch of ICANN's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 necessitated the need to review and align a new plan for the Africa region in congruence with the overall strategic Direction of ICANN org.

Consequently, an open call was made to the community to join a new African Strategy Working Group (ASWG 2020). The goal of ASWG 2020 was to develop a draft Africa Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 and align it with ICANN's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025. A Working Group (WG) of 25 individuals was finally selected and inaugurated in January 2020.

The WG worked hard to prepare an aligned Africa Regional Plan draft in time to present to the community by ICANN67. Feedback from ICANN67 was further considered and incorporated into this final draft version which was subsequently posted for a 40-day Public Comment period from 15 April to 27 May 2020.

We take this opportunity to thank the individual community members and constituencies who took their time (despite the tough challenges presented by the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic) to read and respond to the call for Public Comment accordingly. Your valuable insights and input will ensure that the Africa Regional Plan is richer and more responsive to the needs of the community while contributing to the realization of ICANN's mission. Thank you for your continued support.

Next steps:

1. ICANN org will review the submitted comments during the Public Comment period.
2. ICANN org will incorporate pertinent comments into the final document.
3. Lastly, ICANN org will then consolidate the comments, generate an updated strategy document as per the comments and produce the final ICANN – Africa Regional Plan for fiscal years 2021 – 2025 by the end of June 2020.

Kindly note that there was no extension on the close date of this Public Comment proceeding.

Section II: Contributors

At the time this report was prepared, a total of six (6) community submissions had been posted to the forum. The contributors, both individuals and organizations/groups, are listed below in chronological order of posting date with initials noted. To the extent that quotations are used in the foregoing narrative (Section III), such citations will reference the contributor's initials.

Organizations and Groups:

| Name | Submitted by | Initials |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Business Constituency | Steve DelBianco | BC |
| AFRALO | ICANN At-Large Staff | ALAC |
| Non-Commercial Stakeholders Group | Rafik Dammak | NCSG |
| Africa Top Level Domains Organization | AFTLD Secretariat | AFTLD |

Individuals:

| Name | Affiliation (if provided) | Initials |
|--------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Serge-Parfait Goma | Individual | SG |
| Grogoire Ehoumi | Individual | GE |

Section III: Summary of Comments

General Disclaimer: This section intends to summarize broadly and comprehensively the comments submitted to this public comment proceeding. It does not address every specific position stated by each contributor. The author recommends that readers interested in specific aspects of any of the summarized comments, or the full context of others, refer directly to the specific contributions at the link referenced above (View Comments Submitted).

Summary of General Comments;

- A general observation which we made across the entire Africa Regional Strategic Plan was although action steps for achieving the five strategic objectives were included, there were no Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to indicate how the progress made achieving these would be assessed. We also noted that KPIs had been included in the Africa Regional Strategic Plan for FY 2016 - 2020. (NCSG)
- At the ICANN67 meeting, it had been mentioned by the ASWG that the Africa Regional Strategic Plan doesn't include any KPIs because this is a strategy document and not an implementation document. If this response still holds then, we suggest moving the action steps, KPIs and timelines for achieving each objective to a separate implementation document. This would be instrumental in helping to evaluate all progress made and also indicate where progress has not been made, which is valuable for ongoing and future planning. (NCSG)
- Across the strategy document, we suggest including the development of e-learning materials tailored to the African context and best practices documents. We also suggest identifying the major stakeholders who will work with ICANN on achieving the strategic objectives. (NCSG)
- The Africa Regional Strategic Plan tends to identify and list a lot of issues and action items that it will address and implement. We question whether this is feasible in the 5-year window. Therefore, we suggest utilizing the S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound) approach and focusing on achievable and measurable goals for this time frame. (NCSG)
- Where capacity-building is referenced in the strategic plan, we suggest including the engagement of qualified and available African professionals (both resident in Africa and

outside) in achieving the objectives listed. Africa has a rich pool of talented and skilled professionals, both resident on the continent and outside it, who can collaborate to achieve the stated objectives. (NCSG)

- Another observation was that the links embedded in the document don't work. These should be resolved before final publication of the report (NCSG & BC)
- We suggest that the 5 overall strategic objectives be assigned weighted priority and expected timelines to enable proper understanding of the focus and better tracking. (AFRALO)
- There is no explicit mention of collaboration with Africa Top Level Domains (AfTLD) Organization. I think AfTLD can help on some action steps. (GE)
- We call upon ICANN to consider the following issues as it implements in Regional Strategy for financial years 2021 – 2025; (AFTLD)
 - Dedicate more financial resources to the global stakeholder engagement team in Africa for supporting ccTLD development in the region particularly in capacity building.
 - Dedicate more financial resources to the global stakeholder engagement team for stakeholder engagement to support our efforts as the regional organization in encouraging governments to embrace best practices in management of ccTLD and new TLDs in general with an emphasis on public private partnership based models for ccTLD and 3 R (Registry, Registrar Registrant models) for new TLDs
 - Strengthen the capacity of the Nairobi hub to engage key stakeholders drawn from government, private sector, technical community and academia across the African continent on the role of ICANN and the Domain Name System for Social and Economic development.
- As it has been noted in the draft concerning the disclaimer on the non-capture of the effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the document, the BC agrees that now is the time to factor into the Strategic Plan the effect of this major global disaster on the future performance projection of the Fiscal Years 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. (BC)
- On the first paragraph of 1.1.2 viz comparison to a particular region, comparison should be based on an available global standard, so reference to the "West" should be replaced with "...high cost of Internet connectivity and a low level of digital literacy compared to global standard." (a link here to global standard via ITU or any other statistics would be beneficial) (BC)
- On the second paragraph of 1.1.2: We recommend the specific inclusion of business in the discussion. The statement can be updated to read "...Internet stakeholders (in particular business) to address these challenges..." This emphasis places focus on enabling business to invest in the sector. (BC)

Comments Specific to Each Strategic Objective

1. Strengthen the Security of the Domain Name System and the DNS Root Server System.

- The following listed targeted outcomes do not appear to be related to security goals:
 - Increased IPv6 adoption in Africa
 - Better promotion for a systemic approach to interconnection in Africa to help lower the connection costs for the end users.

We suggest moving the IPv6 adoption outcome to the Unique identifier's objective. (NCSG)

- It has been predicted that the next generation of Internet users will be from developing economies, many of which are in the African region. It is, therefore, important to continue to promote open Internet standards and we are glad to see that this has been included. However, we hope that this will not just be limited to the Internet engineering standards but also to other efforts that contribute to free and open Internet such as the open data, open government, etc. We believe that ICANN can contribute towards this while staying within its mission. (AFRALO)
- ICANN contributes in lobbying and also as an actor to do more advocacy with governments

(Regulator, Ministry of Post and Telecom) on the issue of Internet taxation and practical costs to make the Internet a product accessible to all. (SG)

- ICANN should be an ambassador to governments and the community in establishing clear, transparent and harmonized registry and registrar policies by promoting ccTLD adoption. (SG)
- It would be desirable for the objectives of the region to be able to integrate also awareness and promotion of the Geographical Domain Name, which is a major challenge for the future, given the diversity of peoples, cultures and geographical regions in Africa. (SG)

2. Improve the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance.

- In section 3.2.2 on Regional Goals, we suggest including (NCSG)
 - Improving the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance building on the mechanisms put in place for the IGFs (African IGF, West African IGF, national IGFs)
 - Raising awareness and informing the African community of the critical importance of its presence and participation in discussions within the ICANN community mainly governments, the private sector and end-users (notably under-represented groups such as women and youth).
 - Having the regional office identify major stakeholders and initiate an outreach program to especially governments and academic institutions. Also embark on constant engagement with these identified stakeholders not necessarily in-person, but also through webinars, email updates and other digital communication channels.
- A true multi-stakeholder environment can be achieved when there is equal opportunity to participate. However, we recognize the challenge that it may not be possible to fully achieve this, but we are happy that there is a plan to further bridge the gap. In implementation of the goals stated in section 3.2.2 of the draft plan, we once again offer to the GSE team AFRALO membership, which consists of At-Large Structures (ALSs) and individual members spread across the continent who can serve as a resource towards improving ICANN governance through community engagements within their communities. (AFRALO)
- ICANN meetings have only held in 3 countries in the entire continent of over 50 countries, yet the benefit of hosting such meetings is mutual; in order to improve participation, we encourage the GSE team to look into how they can realistically support other countries who express interest to host such meetings to become a reality. (AFRALO)

3. Evolve the Unique identifier Systems in coordination and collaboration with relevant parties to continue to serve the needs of the global Internet user base.

- Include in the 3.3.2 Regional Goals section the following: (NCSG)
 - Produce templates and best practice guides for nations, ISPs, Universities and companies in the adoption of IPv6
 - Identify and reach out to these groups on implementation plans
- We appreciate the regional goals enumerated in the plan which already cover areas of importance, but we would suggest that this particular objective be prioritized as it will be more required than ever going forward. (AFRALO)

4. Address geopolitical issues impacting ICANN's mission to ensure a single and globally interoperable Internet.

- In the 3.4.2 Regional Goals section, we suggest including the following:
 - Institute or encourage a program for business development in domain names on the continent to avoid dependencies on using registries outside the continent.
 - Some of the identified goals could be better defined e.g. Build a more engaged ICANN in Africa; and Promote a single global Internet. (NCSG)
- As we know, there have been cases of partial or total Internet shutdowns in certain parts of the region and this has negative impacts on the entire economy, including the Domain Name

System (DNS). While we understand that this is outside ICANN mandate and do not encourage ICANN to be involved in country government decision making, we encourage ICANN to use the existing governmental platforms (some of which have been listed in the plan) to create awareness and education with the goal of reducing such occurrences. We, therefore, support and look forward to the outcomes listed in the plan. (AFRALO)

- On 3.4 Geopolitics: We believe the word “not” is missing in the statement “Some African governments still believe that this role should NOT be left to ICANN.” (BC)
- On 3.4.4 Action Steps: We recommend that the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) should be equally engaged in this regard. (BC)

5. Ensure ICANN’s long-term financial sustainability.

- In Section 3.5 on Introduction, we suggest including some numbers to make better sense of the statement that the revenue contributions by African registrars and ccTLDs have barely changed since the publication of the last regional plan in 2015. These could be USD revenue, percentage contribution or other appropriate metric (kindly note that the link to the Africa DNS Market Study 2016 is not working so the reader is unable to refer to this). (NCSG)
- Section 3.5.4 bullet 1 can include ICANN working with African registries as well as ICANN members based in Africa to educate businesses on the benefits of having an online presence. Some members of the Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group based in Africa are already involved in education activities and may be able to provide valuable insight in methods to create more awareness and willingness for African businesses to purchase domain names. (NCSG)
- Within the ICANN Strategic Plan FY 2021 - 2025, one of the ways that ICANN intends to ensure long- term sustainability is by: Managing operations and their costs to optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of ICANN’s activities. So, a suggestion is for the Africa regional plan to address how it intends to implement this for the African region (NCSG)
- We observed that increasing the number of registrars/registries within the region is no longer on the plan, while this was the case in previous plans. We, however, believe that this is still work in progress and should continue to be in the plan to better improve the DNS economy and business within the region. (AFRALO)
- On 3.5 Financial: We recommend that collaboration with businesses such as Business Associations and Chambers of Commerce in Africa should be explored. We propose this text: A paradigm shift to engaging Business Associations and Chambers of Commerce in this regard would be explored. (BC)

Section IV: Analysis of Comments

General Disclaimer: This section intends to provide an analysis and evaluation of the comments submitted along with explanations regarding the basis for any recommendations provided within the analysis.

| Comment | Staff Analysis |
|--|---|
| <p>A general observation which we made across the entire Africa Regional Strategic Plan was although action steps for achieving the five strategic objectives were included, there were no Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to indicate how the progress made achieving these would be assessed. We also noted that KPIs had been included in the Africa Regional Strategic Plan for FY 2016 - 2020. (NCSG)</p> | <p>We believe actual KPIs would be better identified, prioritized and developed in an operational plan. The GSE Africa team would consider developing annual operational plans with KPIs that is aligned with available resources, including financial resources.</p> |
| <p>Across the strategy document, we suggest including the development of e-learning materials tailored to the African context and best practices documents. We also suggest identifying the major stakeholders who will work with ICANN on achieving the strategic objectives. (NSCG)</p> | <p>The GSE Africa team would work closely with the community to keep identifying potential topics and high interest topical areas (especially that are crucial to the Africa region) and recommend to our e-learning team for development and provisioning online for the community.</p> |
| <p>The Africa Regional Strategic Plan tends to identify and list a lot of issues and action items that it will address and implement. We question whether this is feasible in the 5-year window. Therefore, we suggest utilizing the S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound) approach and focusing on achievable and measurable goals for this time frame. (NCSG)</p> | <p>We take note of this concern and reiterate that our annual operational plans would include SMART KPIs that are aligned with the available resources.</p> |
| <p>Where capacity-building is referenced in the strategic plan, we suggest including the engagement of qualified and available African professionals (both resident in Africa and outside) in achieving the objectives listed. Africa has a rich pool of talented and skilled professionals, both resident on the continent and outside it, who can collaborate to achieve the stated objectives. (NCSG)</p> | <p>We welcome this proposal and indeed it is a principle already embraced in implementing our current Strategic plan. We find it more cost effective, efficient and ensures an inclusive approach to furthering our engagement efforts in the region. We intend to continue drawing on the expertise of our community from within and without Africa to help advance the implementation of this plan.</p> |
| <p>We suggest that the 5 overall strategic objectives be assigned weighted priority and expected timelines to enable proper understanding of the focus and better tracking. (AFRALO)</p> | <p>It might not be possible to assign a weight at the Strategic Object level per se, this is because these objectives are at the ICANN org level and were adopted by the global community. However, we shall prioritize implementation of specific projects drawn from the various strategic points as guided by the needs of the Africa region.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>There is no explicit mention of collaboration with Africa Top Level Domains (AftLD) Organization. I think AftLD can help on some action steps. (GE)</p> | <p>We already collaborate with not only AFTLD, but a number of both regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa to leverage on their activities, expertise, audiences and even plan joint initiatives that are of mutual benefit. While we may not have listed all such organizations by name, and considering we remain open to new ones in future, such strategic partnerships will continue under this plan as well.</p> |
| <p>ICANN contributes in lobbying and also as an actor to do more advocacy with governments (Regulator, Ministry of Post and Telecom) on the issue of Internet taxation and practical costs to make the Internet a product accessible to all. (SG)</p> | <p>The issue of online taxation (to tax or not) as well as cost of connectivity in general are outside the remit of ICANN org. We will however continue with advocacy efforts including targeting governments on the benefits of one interoperable and open Internet as well as other areas within ICANNs remit.</p> |
| <p>ICANN should be an ambassador to governments and the community in establishing clear, transparent and harmonized registry and registrar policies by promoting ccTLD adoption. (SG)</p> | <p>While ICANN org may not force governments to adopt their ccTLDs, we would continue to engage with them, and work with ccTLD operators in Africa and offer our expertise when called upon on various challenges that could promote the growth of ccTLDs in Africa. ICANN org already dedicated a significant amount of resources to support our ccTLDs in Africa especially through capacity building initiatives.</p> |
| <p>It would be desirable for the objectives of the region to be able to integrate also awareness and promotion of the Geographical Domain Name, which is a major challenge for the future, given the diversity of peoples, cultures and geographical regions in Africa. (SG)</p> | <p>This is well noted, and we encourage the community to participate in discussions related to geographical domain names</p> |
| <p>In section 3.2.2 on Regional Goals, we suggest including (NCSG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance building on the mechanisms put in place for the IGFs (African IGF, West African IGF, national IGFs) ● Raising awareness and informing the African community of the critical importance of its presence and participation in discussions within the ICANN community mainly governments, the private sector and end- users (notably under-represented groups such as women and youth). | <p>These points are well noted.</p> |
| <p>As we know, there have been cases of partial or total Internet shutdowns in certain parts of the region and this has negative impacts on the entire economy, including the Domain Name System (DNS). While we understand that this is outside ICANN mandate and do not encourage ICANN to be involved in country government decision making, we encourage ICANN to use the existing</p> | <p>This point is well noted and needs no reaction from ICANN org.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>governmental platforms (some of which have been listed in the plan) to create awareness and education with the goal of reducing such occurrences. We, therefore, support and look forward to the outcomes listed in the plan. (AFRALO)</p> | |
| <p>A true multi-stakeholder environment can be achieved when there is equal opportunity to participate. However, we recognize the challenge that it may not be possible to fully achieve this, but we are happy that there is a plan to further bridge the gap. In implementation of the goals stated in section 3.2.2 of the draft plan, we once again offer to the GSE team AFRALO membership, which consists of At-Large Structures (ALSs) and individual members spread across the continent who can serve as a resource towards improving ICANN governance through community engagements within their communities. (AFRALO)</p> | <p>Again, we welcome this proposal and indeed it is a principle already embraced in implementing our current Strategic plan. We find it more cost effective, efficient and ensuring an inclusive approach to furthering our engagement efforts in the region. We intend to continue drawing on the expertise of our community from within and without Africa to help advance the implementation of this plan.</p> |
| <p>ICANN meetings have only held in 3 countries in the entire continent of over 50 countries, yet the benefit of hosting such meetings in mutual; in order to improve participation, we encourage the GSE team to look into how they can realistically support other countries who express interest to host such meetings to become a reality. (AFRALO)</p> | <p>While we take note of this feedback, ICANN meetings have indeed been held in six countries in Africa (Ghana, Morocco, South Africa, Kenya, Senegal and Egypt), with most of these countries hosting the meeting more than once. This has been an open process and we can only encourage African countries to try to meet the requirements of the terms of reference of hosting the meeting.</p> |
| <p>We observed that increasing the number of registrars/registries within the region is no longer on the plan, while this was the case in previous plans. We, however, believe that this is still work in progress and should continue to be in the plan to better improve the DNS economy and business within the region. (AFRALO)</p> | <p>We take note of this feedback and would discuss it further including with the registrar community in Africa.</p> |
| <p>On the second paragraph of 1.1.2: We recommend the specific inclusion of business in the discussion. The statement can be updated to read "...Internet stakeholders (in particular business) to address these challenges..." This emphasis places focus on enabling business to invest in the sector. (BC)</p> | <p>A number of editorial suggestions by the BC, including this one, are well noted and would be considered accordingly.</p> |