

**TECHNICAL ADVICE KICK-OFF MEETING, Sunday 17 November 2013,
ICANN 48, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 10:30 AM - noon**

Steve Crocker welcomed the four-dozen participants to the meeting and stressed the importance for ICANN of starting to actively seek high-level technical input into its work. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the modalities of ICANN's interaction with technical experts from the Technical Liaison Group (TLG) and from the Advisory Committees (ACs) and Supporting Organizations (SOs). The discussion covered both content and process points of view.

He highlighted ICANN's unique structure in which SOs and ACs, made up of volunteers supported by some staff, are very independent. He stressed the central role of SOs in developing policies, overseen by the Board of Directors that also depends on the input of formal advisory Committees (SSAC, RSSAC, ALAC, GAC), of ICANN staff, of several review teams and expert groups.

He further noted that there were two non-voting technical representative seats on the Board established in 2002 – one held by the IETF and one held by the Technical Liaison Group rotating annually. The TLG is comprised of the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), International Telecommunications Union's Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T), and the Internet Architecture Board (IAB). He added that the ICANN Bylaws specify that each TLG organization should appoint two technical experts to the TLG who are familiar with the ICANN-relevant technical standards issues and who the ICANN Board can call upon to provide or to coordinate technical advice as necessary. In his view, the Board had learned over time that the shared seat (ETSI, W3C, ITU-T, IAB) was structurally weak and had decided to remove this seat from the Board. He related that in parallel, the Board had decided to strengthen the Technical Liaison Group and solidify the institutional relationships with them, to better benefit from the group members' expertise and knowledge.¹

He shared his appreciation of the tremendous amount of work, engagement and conscientiousness behind the advice that all the various groups provide to the Board, and the need for the Board to act on this advice through acknowledgement, consideration and feedback to the initiating groups.

At the same time, he stressed the multi-faceted challenge for the Board of processing incoming advice. He positioned the discussion within a larger objective for ICANN to improve its management of all types of advice effectively – in particular technical advice. He stressed that before deciding whether to accept advice or not, the Board would naturally need to first evaluate the feasibility of implementing specific advice, the clarity of the advice, the financial and human resources that would be required, the location of implementation, the party responsible for it, and the impact on organizations or processes. In his view, groups providing advice would increasingly anticipate these kinds of questions and align the quality, shape and nature of the advice with practical feasibility considerations etc.

In time, he believed that groups providing advice would eventually anticipate this type of evaluation questions and include elements of response in their advice, thereby facilitating both ICANN staff's evaluation of the advice and the Board's evaluation and decision-making on the advice. He explained that traditionally advice is implemented through the Board passing a resolution and tasking staff to implement.

Dr. Crocker then provided an overview of the proof-of-concept tool that ICANN had developed to register and track follow-up on recent advice to the Board by SSAC and ALAC (<https://www.mycicann.org/board-advice>),

¹ At the time of this meeting, the proposal to revise the Bylaws to discontinue the TLG's appointment of a Liaison to the Board was out for public comment. The public comment forum closed on 20 December 2013. On 7 February 2014, in Resolution 2014.02.07.03, the Board approved the proposed Bylaws revisions to, among other things, discontinue the TLG's appointment of a Liaison to the Board (<http://www.icann.org/en/groups/board/documents/resolutions-07feb14-en.htm#1.e>)

including: (i) the acknowledgement of receipt and inclusion in the public registry; (ii) a relatively rapid evaluation process; (iii) assignment of specific advice to a specific individual/group to follow-up. The proof-of-concept tool's fields are: "Date," "Topic," "Title," "Recommendation," "Current Status," "Action Taken by the Board," "Additional Information," "Group Reference," "Group Date", "Date of Acknowledgment," "Date Completed or Closed," "URL for Info on the Recommendation," and so forth.

He then opened the floor for comments, including on questions:

- Of a process nature, including:
 - Feedback, clarification of roles and procedures;
 - How the Board should treat and provide constructive feedback on advice considered not useful, not implementable, non-budgeted or unaligned with strategic goals etc.;
 - Feedback on the proof-of-concept tool and how it could be made most useful to all parties;
 - Whether technical experts or other providers of advice would prefer to be asked for specific advice or would prefer to offer advice on topics of their choice, or both
- Content-related questions, in particular the areas in which participants (both those who need advice and who have the expertise to provide advice) believe ICANN most needs technical advice?

Various types of technical advice need to be handled

Ray Plzak highlighted that continuous, both solicited and unsolicited, technical advice comes from standing Advisory Committees such as SSAC or RSSAC while expert panels or working groups tend to generate more issue-specific and *ad hoc* technical advice.

Taking the example of name collision, **Jay Dayley** highlighted the complexity of the Board receiving multiple sets of technical advice on the same topic rather than a consensus piece of advice. Steve Crocker answered that the process should be flexible enough to accommodate various types of advice.

Evan Leibovitch shared his view that all types of advice, both technical and policy, should be tracked in a similar fashion. In addition, to his question about whether an iterative process exists for the Board to ask advising parties for clarification, Steve Crocker answered that ensuring clarity of advice was part of the process for evaluating and tracking advice.

Jim Galvin, vice chair of SSAC, raised the issue of experts speaking in their individual capacity versus on behalf of an organization.

Kuo-Wei Wu pointed to two examples of instances in which he felt that a technical liaison would help, namely with Internationalized Domain Names (IDN) variants and with string conflicts. He expressed the desire to have access to real-life data on phishing in string similarity issues.

Kuo-Wei Wu stressed the need to differentiate between different types of advice and his view that advice from technical groups was generally implementable whereas some advice from non-technical groups may not be workable.

Russ Housley, citing the example of dotless domains, underscored that the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) had felt that awareness needed to be raised on how the dotless domain concept conflicted with existing IETF standards, but that it could not have foreseen the importance of this topic prior to the events that lead up to that.

Tracking technical advice to the ICANN Board in a publicly available registry

Patrick Fältström emphasized SSAC's enthusiasm with the proof-of-concept development of an advice-tracking tool. He noted that two of the areas that may be problematic include tracking advice on one topic coming from multiple different sources that partially overlaps, as well as tracking non consideration by the Board or no follow-up on specific advice, and the reasons for it.

Wolfgang Kleinwächter ventured that while the advice tracking tool helps to share community knowledge and wisdom with the Board, procedures to deal with advice could perhaps be further formalized, including possibly through a bylaws change. Steve Crocker highlighted the importance of having a very compelling reason for changing the bylaws.

Timeliness versus quality of technical advice

Jim Galvin underlined the natural tension between the deadlines given by ICANN staff, which is responsible for summarizing public comments and the timeliness of advice provided by technical experts acting in a volunteer capacity who may not be willing or able to abide by these deadlines. He pointed out that ICANN's public comment period provides a natural channel for the rest of the community made up of volunteers to engage and to become part of a structured process.

Steve Crocker and **Jonne Soininen** further noted that ICANN's own Advisory Committees can often be faster than institutional partners such as the IETF, which has its own work schedule.

Steve Crocker emphasized that obtaining technical advice early in the policy development process (PDP) is critical and that a discussion about what are the right technical questions should take place. He stressed how policy processes that did not consider technical limitations would fail, as would policy processes that assumed the wrong technical constraints.

Evan Leibovitch stressed that ALAC could allocate more time to a broad and high quality bottom-up response if more time is provided for response. He argued for upstream planning and providing sufficient time to advisory Committees. He added that non-solicited comments include critical "alarm-type" comments. **Steve Crocker** responded that he would be keen to review some recent "alarm-type" comments from ALAC.

Bertrand de La Chapelle echoed comments on the importance of technical advice in the very early stages of framing policy discussions, even before the development of an issue report. He distinguished such early, informal, often oral, 'birds of a feather' engagement from formal, precise advice.

Inter-linkages between policy and technology

Salanieta Tamanikawaimaro from ALAC suggested that as the Board and ICANN community engage in procedural reform, it may be useful to develop a matrix of the inter-linkages between technical vs. policy considerations for topical issues, and the impact on Advisory Committee and wider community processes, both centralized and de centralized.

When **Avri Doria** pointed out the general interdependencies between technology and policy, Steve Crocker agreed and referred to Dave Clark's paper entitled "Tussle in Cyberspace".²

² Braden, D., Clark, D., Sollins, K. and Wroclawski, J., Tussle in Cyberspace: Defining Tomorrow's Internet, SIGCOMM'02, August 19-23, 2002, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, <http://groups.csail.mit.edu/ana/Publications/PubPDFs/Tussle2002.pdf>.

Advice versus comments and processing unsolicited comments

Sébastien Bachollet emphasized the difference between advice, which in his view is a complete and stand-alone document provided to the Board or other ICANN group *during* the policy development process, and comments generated afterwards, during the public comments period that enables those who may not have been part of the policy development process to contribute but may not reflect a stakeholder group consensus position.

Ray Plzak identified the need for a lightweight mechanism to process unsolicited, general advice, *i.e. ex post* comments. He differentiated that from advice that is needed and is solicited from internal advisory committees or from external organizations within specific timelines. In his view prioritizing some types of advice over others is in essence risk management as is determining a path forward if technical advice from different groups conflicts.

Jay Daley stressed the need to limit the advisory parties to the Board in what is currently a one-to-many system. He underlined the need to balance this with advice that suggests additional advice (*e.g.* quantitative study) is needed in what should increasingly resemble a many-to-many conversation.

Suzanne Woolf expressed her satisfaction at the collective recognition of the need for a scalable and comprehensive process. She added that she believes critical and urgent technical advice is occasionally needed that cautions about how particular actions could harm or “break” the Internet. **Steve Crocker** specified that such cautionary advice should educate recipients.

Reviewing staff analysis of advice

Ram Mohan asked the group what in their view the feedback loop from the Board to the Advisory Committees should look like. Currently, staff provides the Board with a first evaluation of the feasibility and appropriateness of advice and advisory groups often do not know their advice has been evaluated and considered unless they recognize it in a Board resolution. Ram specifically asked the group whether they would like staff to liaise with them prior to submitting their evaluation to the Board to enable review of the evaluation.

Later on in the meeting **Evan Leibovitch** answered that indeed the ALAC would greatly appreciate the opportunity to review staff analysis. He added that part of ALAC’s response to staff-induced errors had been to include executive summaries of all the advice it provides to the ICANN Board but that the possibility to review staff analysis would solve many issues related to misinterpretation of advice. **Steve Crocker** agreed that the process should include verifying the accurate capture of the intent of the advice with the originators of the advice.

Respective characteristics and roles of the ICANN Board, constituencies and technical liaison group

Marc Blanchet distinguished technical members who were already deeply embedded in the ICANN ecosystem, including the SSAC, RSSAC and ALAC Advisory Committees, from other groups slightly more distant to ICANN, such as the IETF. He asked for clarification on the different roles of the two IETF volunteers in the technical liaison group versus the IETF liaison to the ICANN Board as well as for ICANN’s expectations from the two volunteers that each technical organization was being asked to provide to populate the TLG.

Steve Crocker echoed that the IETF is an organization of volunteers that operates in a bottom-up fashion such that one does not generally “send over” a question or request to the IETF, but rather, must participate in the IETF, form a working group and help organize an activity within the IETF from which to generate notes, trigger community discussions, etc.

Ensuring useful quantities and forms of information provided to the Board

Reminding the group of the overwhelming quantity of information that the Board already has, **Jörg Schweiger** cautioned against engineering a process in which every advice needed to be heard. He elaborated on his belief of technical decisions often being straightforward and of the ICANN Board making decisions in a timely and scheduled manner. Steve Crocker agreed with the need for the Board to remain on schedule.

Key take-aways

Key take-aways from the discussion summarized by **Steve Crocker** included: *(i)* Identifying and framing technical considerations very early in the policy development process; *(ii)* Providing originators of advice with the opportunity to review the analysis of their advice to ensure accurate interpretation of their meaning; and, *(iii)* Considering the meeting and the proof-of-concept register as the beginning of the conversation to trigger further discussions among the ICANN Board, Staff and Community.

ATTENDEES

Board attendees: Kuo-Wei Wu, ICANN board from the Asia-Pacific region
Sebastien Bachollet, member of the ICANN board and from -- selected by At-Large
George Sadowsky, ICANN board member
Ray Plzak, board member selected by the ASO from North America
Steve Crocker, ICANN board
Ram Mohan, ICANN board selected by the Security and Stability Advisory Committee
Bertrand de La Chapelle, ICANN board
Gonzalo Navarro, ICANN board
Jonne Soininen, IETF liaison to the ICANN board
Suzanne Woolf, RSSAC liaison to the ICANN board
Bill Graham, ICANN board
Wolfgang Kleinwächter, ICANN board

TLG attendees: Daniel Dardailler, W3C (remote);
Wendy Seltzer, W3C (remote);
Russ Housley, Chair of the IAB; Marc Blanchet, IAB member

Advisory Committees and Supporting Organizations: Patrik Fältström, chair of SSAC;
Jim Galvin, vice chair of SSAC;
Lars-Johan Liman, co-chair of the Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC);
Louie Lee, chair of the ASO Address Council;
Salanieta Tamanikaiwaimaro, ALAC;
Eberhard Lisse, manager of dot na, and chairman of the ccNSO technical working group;
Jay Daley from dot NZ registry and ccNSO technical working group
Evan Leibovitch, vice chair of ALAC
Jörg Schweiger, dot de and co-chair of the DSSA – WG (Joint DNS Security and Stability Analysis Working Group by the ALAC, ccNSO, GNSO and NRO);
Jacques Latour with dot ca;
Dave Chiswell, dot ca;
Stu Olmstead-Wilcox, dot ca;
Glenn McKnight, ALAC NomCom Representative (after roll call)
Avri Doria, ATRT2 Member (after roll call)

Staff attendees: John Crain, ICANN staff
Sally Costerton, ICANN staff
Elise Gerich, ICANN IANA and DNS department
Michelle Bright, ICANN staff
Akram Atallah, ICANN President (after roll call)
Fadi Chehadé, ICANN CEO (after roll call)
Karine Perset, ICANN staff
Paul Mockapetris
Barbara Roseman, ICANN policy group for RSSAC, SSAC and ASO.
Patrick Jones, ICANN staff
Save Vocea, ICANN staff
Veni Markovski, VP ICANN Russia, CIS
Chris Mondini, ICANN staff
Baher Esmat, ICANN staff