28 May 2024

Nicolas G. Caballero
Chair, ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee

Re: Statements of Interest and Disclosures in ICANN's Multistakeholder Model

Dear Nicolas Caballero,

Thank you for the 28 February 2024 letter on behalf of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) regarding the work within the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) on statements of interest. As the GAC noted during its subsequent ICANN79 Communiqué, the Board had an opportunity to discuss this issue with the GAC during our bilateral session during ICANN79, and I also note that the GAC engaged directly with the GNSO on this important topic.

I write to reiterate that the Board also considers this item as very important. The Board is examining how this can be considered more broadly, to ensure that all of ICANN's constituent bodies, including the GNSO, are expected to require disclosures of interests in policy development and operational activities.
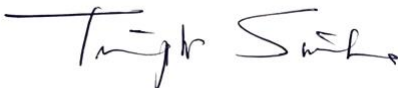
In light of the GAC's and others' requests, the Board has commenced a discussion on the need for a broader ethics policy that covers statements of interest and disclosure requirements. The Board upholds the idea that all those who participate within the ICANN multistakeholder model should, for the benefit of all who are participating, maintain up-to-date statements of interest identifying which persons or entities they are representing within ICANN processes.

The Board discussed encouraging informed participation across ICANN's processes. Understanding the interests participating within processes is important at all levels of ICANN's work, from the working group level where people are expected to bring their interests to the table to support broad and informed policy development, through to Board consideration of those recommendations, which includes understanding the ideas and concerns that have been brought into the recommendation development processes.

As the GNSO has been discussing this issue, the Board has repeatedly called on all involved to consider the need for the community to consider how to evolve processes designed to ensure ethical and accountable participation. The community has an important role in facilitating reasonable, objective and informed participation in ICANN policy making.

As the GAC noted in the ICANN79 Communiqué, there is more to discuss within the ICANN community on this important topic.  We thank the GAC for its vigilance in upholding the trust and confidence in ICANN's multistakeholder model, and look forward to the GAC's continued participation and input.

Sincerely,

Tripti Sinha
Chair, ICANN Board of Directors