Independent Review of the ICANN Security and Stability Advisory Committee:

Assessment Report

Report Prepared for the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

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Executive Summary

Since 2002, the Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC) has advised the ICANN community and the ICANN Board of Directors (ICANN Board) on issues concerning the security and integrity of the Internet's naming and address allocation systems. The ICANN Bylaws require that the SSAC be independently reviewed at least once every five years.[3] In accordance with this requirement, our review includes an assessment of: (1) the implementation state of SSAC's prior review, (2) whether SSAC has a continuing purpose within the ICANN structure, (3) how effectively SSAC fulfills its purpose and whether any change in structure or operations is needed to improve effectiveness, and (4) the extent to which SSAC as a whole is accountable to the wider ICANN community, its organizations, committees, constituencies, and stakeholder groups.

This report is the first stage of our independent review of the SSAC: an assessment of the SSAC's performance. A final report, which will be published later this year, will also include our recommendations to increase the SSAC's effectiveness.

The findings of our review are based on auditing of SSAC's in-person meetings at ICANN61 and those conducted remotely after ICANN61, a large number of individual interviews conducted among members of the ICANN community both in person and remotely, an online survey provided to members of the ICANN community, and a comprehensive review of materials published by the SSAC. Our interview and survey processes were designed to capture a wide variety of perspectives on the role of the SSAC, its strengths and weaknesses, and its relationship with the ICANN community.

Our principal findings are summarized briefly here and in more detail in Section I.D of this report.

- The SSAC is widely acknowledged to be very important to the overall mission of ICANN, the role of the SSAC as described in the ICANN Bylaws is closely aligned with ICANN's mission, and the SSAC is successful in providing high quality advice on a broad variety of relevant security, stability, and resiliency (SSR) issues. The SSAC is accountable directly to the ICANN Board, and through it to the wider ICANN community.

- Individuals suggested that the largest impediment to the SSAC's success is the fact that the organization is volunteer-based and has a large amount of work to do.

- The SSAC's process of generating advice is collegial and is generally effective. However, there is some concern among members of the SSAC that advice provided to the ICANN Board is not acted on in a timely manner. Similarly, there is some concern among members of the ICANN Board that the advice of the SSAC is not provided sufficiently quickly to the Board.

- Some interviewees indicated that there could be value in developing processes by which the SSAC could more formally review the security ecosystem as part of its topic selection process.

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[3] ICANN Bylaws, *ICANN*, Article 4, Section 4, available at
https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en#VII-1, accessed on May 1, 2018.

- There is a need for individuals with an understanding of SSR-related issues to take part in policy development, and members of the ICANN community discussed whether or not the SSAC or its members (as individuals) should play that role.

- The SSAC's size of roughly 40 members appears to be appropriate given tradeoffs in the size of the SSAC, though some thought that additional members with additional perspectives would be valuable.

- Many interviewees would like to see improvements in the SSAC's recruiting process, but they are cautious about the burden such processes might place on the SSAC's volunteers.

- The SSAC is perceived to lack geographical and gender diversity and is comprised mostly of male individuals from the U.S. and Europe, though it has diversity in technical expertise.

- The membership review process used by the SSAC today is clearer and more transparent than it had been in the past, and when flaws have been identified, the process has undergone (and continues to undergo) improvements.

- The SSAC's term length of three years for members is generally considered to be appropriate, but there exists much more variation in individuals' views as to the appropriate term limit, if any, for SSAC leadership.

- The SSAC is generally seen to be less transparent than other parts of ICANN. While most interviewees understand this to be necessary given the sensitive nature of security risks, many would like to see a more transparent SSAC.

- The SSAC has taken clear steps to implement the recommendations that were accepted after its prior review, and makes clear efforts to continually improve outside of the formal review process.

This assessment report has been published to solicit feedback from the ICANN community. Between June and July of 2018, there will be a public consultation period that will include a webinar and a public participation mailing list. The webinar is set to take place on July 12, 2018 at 20:00 UTC, with additional information available at https://community.icann.org/display/ ACCSSAC/Assessment+Report+Webinar. To participate in the webinar and/or the mailing list, please contact mssi-secretariat@icann.org.

We will incorporate feedback into a final report, which will contain both our assessment of the SSAC and our recommendations for improving the operation of the SSAC. A draft final report will be published for public comments on September 12, 2018. The public comment period will last 40 days and close on October 22, 2018. After incorporating comments from the ICANN community, the final report will be published on November 21, 2018.