UNESCO COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON INTERNET RELATED ISSUES

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is honoured to participate in, and contribute to, this important and timely exercise being carried out by UNESCO.

While our responsibilities are narrow compared to the breadth and scope of this Study, we hope our experiences, as a player in the global Internet Governance Ecosystem will be instructive. In the attached link we have also addressed a few specific issues raised in the Questionnaire.

http://unesco-ci.org/cmscore/node/282/done?sid=2515&token=49dbf5aed09e04e89148440bd015ea1a

Background

ICANN was formed in 1998 and since then has had responsibility for the overall coordination of the Domain Name System. As well as overseeing policies relating to the management of domain names and IP addresses, it also has direct contractual relations with, as well as setting standards for, a number of registries and registrars; including all those offering new generic top level domains (gTLDs). ICANN pursues its responsibilities with an international and multilingual staff of over 300; and a multinational and regionally diverse Board. We have operational (hub) offices in Singapore and Istanbul (in addition to the HQ in Los Angeles) and Engagement offices in Brussels; Beijing, Seoul, Montevideo, Washington DC and Geneva. Senior Management (and respective functions) now operates outside of Los Angeles with the trend to continue (not least reflecting the increasing global nature of the DNS). Our presence in Geneva and New York, for example, reflects the need to deepen our engagement with the IGOs, not least UNESCO, and UN country missions.

ICANN operates through a broad Community made up of an array of stakeholders; including governments, Registries and Registrars, business, civil society and user representatives. It has a diverse and elected Board that ultimately make decisions based on consultative and open processes. Governments, operating within the Government Advisory Committee (GAC) have an important input within the process and have the opportunity of giving (consensus-based) advice to the Board on public policy issues. Such advice has to be listened to and (in the main) is heeded.

1 WWW.ICANN.ORG
Developments

As outlined below we have, in recent years, witnessed unprecedented developments in the use of the Internet, both in terms of physical access and in innovation and variety of uses. In the DNS space we have witnessed an exponential growth in the actual number of domain names in use but also (more importantly) a growth in consumer choice for top-level designators in both Latin and non-Latin scripts. This latter development was cited as important in the WSIS High Level Events hosted by both UNESCO\(^2\) the ITU, \(^3\) and was also recognised during the review and amendment of an ITU Resolution on International Domain Names at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in Busan\(^4\)

The role of governments in Internet Governance, and particularly their responsibility with respect to public policy, has evolved significantly in recent years (as witnessed by increased involvement in international and regional fora) and particularly in ICANN. In 2005 there were around 40 governments taking part in the Government Advisory Committee of ICANN while today there are over 145 in membership with over 30 International and Regional Governmental Organizations as Observers. This is both a clear example of Enhanced Cooperation (as referenced in the Tunis Agenda - and thus negating need for any separate process as far as management of critical Internet Resources are concerned) and the success of the multi-stakeholder approach to governance of the Internet. During recent years the governments; working collectively within the GAC, have been instrumental in implementing important public policy considerations in the new gTLD Programme, that ICANN has rolled out, as well as policies concerning the personal data held by Registries and Registrars of domain name applicants.

The relationship between ICANN and the United States has also evolved. In March 2004 the NTIA (part of Department of Commerce) announced its intention to transfer its stewardship of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) Functions (regulated under a contract with the US Government) to the global multistakeholder community\(^5\). A significant and comprehensive multi-stakeholder process is now underway to determine the way this should be effected and what other processes (if any) are required to take over the role of the NTIA.

\(^2\) http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/unesco-and-wsis/wsis-10-review-meeting/

\(^3\) http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/

\(^4\) http://www.itu.int/en/plenipotentiary/2014/Pages/default.aspx

\(^5\) https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/transition-2014-03-23-en
In addition a wider debate has been initiated by ICANN on its accountability, a process that was started by the Affirmation of Commitments in 2009\(^6\).

**The new gTLD Programme**

ICANN takes its responsibility of the stewardship of the Domain Name System seriously as it does its duty to reflect the needs of the global Community. While domain names are not (like other physical entities) a scare resource, individual choice is limited through the number of generic top-level domains (such as .COM) and country code names (such as .UK or .CH). Against this background ICANN (working with the Community including governments) set out on a process in 2008 to expand the range of gTLDs though an open application process. Working to detailed rules (again laid down by the Community and approved by the GAC) the Round was launched in March 2012. Over 1900 application for new Names (some duplicates) were received including over 100 applications for names in non-Latin Scripts\(^7\) (such as Chinese, Cyrillic and Indian). The “new” Names are now entering the root of the Internet allowing citizens access to geographical (such as .Berlin or .London), and generic (such as .Music and .App) names.

**The wider mission of ICANN**

ICANN, as part of the global Internet governance Ecosystem contributes to the global dialogue in a variety of fora, including the Internet Governance Forum (IGF); the ITU (including the recent Plenipotentiary Conference), the OECD and the UN process for the Review of the WSIS outcomes (WSIS+10 Review). On the latter we were pleased to contribute to the UNESCO hosted WSIS Review meeting in March 2013 and the ITU hosted High Level Event this June in Geneva.

ICANN has also been involved, along with other players, in taking forward development from the highly successful NETMundial Conference, hosted by Brazil in April this year. Along with Brazil and the WEF we have recently launched the (so-called) NETMundial Initiative (NMI) that, inter-alia, will establish a platform through which discussions and policy development can be taken forward on Internet Governance issues.\(^8\)

\(^6\) [https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/aoc-review-2012-02-25-en](https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/aoc-review-2012-02-25-en)

\(^7\) [http://icannwiki.com/index.php/New_gTLD_IDN_Applications](http://icannwiki.com/index.php/New_gTLD_IDN_Applications)

\(^8\) [https://www.netmundial.org/](https://www.netmundial.org/)
We also look forward to the UNESCO Conference (on this important Internet Study) in Paris in March 2015. This comes at an important time in the Preparation phase for the UNGA High Level Meeting on the WSIS+10 Review in December, and just prior to the meeting of the Commission for Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) that will be submitting a Report of the WSIS+10 Review.

The Future

Looking to the future ICANN will seek to continue to evolve as a global organization; as an active player in the global Internet Governance Ecosystem and serving an ever expanding and diverse Community. It will continue to work closely with other bodies, not least our sister technical organizations such as ISOC, IETF\(^9\) and the Regional Internet Registries, but also organisations such as UNESCO, the OECD and the ITU, in the IG space. ICANN is committed to further expand the DNS space, responding to demands from the wide Community, with another gTLD round likely in the next few years.

The WSIS+10 UNGA Review

ICANN looks forward to the privilege of working with other stakeholders in contributing to the Review of the WSIS Outcomes by the UNGA in December 2015. We trust (building on the UNGA Resolution on the modalities for the Review) that we, along with other key players in the Internet Governance Ecosystem will be able to play a full role in the Preparatory process for the UNGA Review and in the High Level Meeting itself. We applaud UNESCO, the ITU and UNCTAD for facilitating a broad church of input during this WSIS+10 Review process and are confident that the necessity for ensuring this happens up to and during the final Review will be recognised.

We are confident that the UNGA will endorse the overall positive effect the WSIS Outcome, and the respective Action Lines, have had; and thus will look to a continuation of the overall process, including the opportunity for the annual WSIS Review sessions to take stock of progress and discuss where further actions and initiatives might be appropriate.

ICANN; November, 2014

\(^{9}\) [https://www.ietf.org/](https://www.ietf.org/)