GAC High Level Government Meeting Discussion

Session # 5

Session Objective

The objective of this session is for GAC Members to collaborate with the meeting host and advisors to "crystallize" the preliminary agenda for the ICANN80 High Level Government Meeting hosted by the Government of Rwanda in Kigali, Rwanda on 9 June 2024.

Session Agenda

During this session, GAC attendees will reaffirm the purpose of High Level Government Meetings (HLGMs) and discuss logistics of the preparations for the June meeting in Kigali. The bulk of the session discussion will focus on a review of the preliminary meeting agenda, including a session-by-session discussion of the subject matter, potential speakers and timing for each of the HLGM sessions.

GAC attendees will receive an update of meeting RSVPs and will be encouraged to review the value of the meeting for senior government officials, GAC representatives and the rest of the ICANN community.

Background

The High Level Government Meeting (HLGM) provides the opportunity to:

- Reaffirm the critical role that governments play in providing advice to the ICANN Board on public-policy issues as it relates to the secure and stable functioning of the Domain Name System.
- Enable all parties to gain a clearer understanding of the role of governments in ICANN processes, including the GAC.
- Discuss current public policy issues and challenges at very senior level. These discussions can occur between government and government, as well as between governments and the ICANN leadership group.
- Expose very senior administrative officials and senior elected officials (Ministers, members of legislative bodies) to ICANN, allowing them to gain a greater understanding of the organization and the issues it deals with. In turn, this may lead to better support for and resourcing of GAC representatives within their home administrations.
- Reach out to administrations and governments who are not yet, or not currently, represented on the GAC or in other ICANN forums.

The GAC has looked to host an HLGM in conjunction with an ICANN meeting and in addition to the usual GAC meeting approximately once every two years. Past HLGMs have been held at the following times in the following locations:

- Toronto, Canada (ICANN45),
- London, England, UK (ICANN50),
- Marrakesh, Morocco (ICANN55) and
- Barcelona, Spain (ICANN63)

The HLGM concept grew out of recommendations made by previous ICANN Accountability and Transparency Review Teams (ATRT1 and ATRT2, respectively):

> ATRT1 Recommendation 14 -- *"The Board should endeavor to increase the level of support and commitment of governments to the GAC process. First, the Board should encourage member countries and organizations to participate in GAC deliberations and should place a particular focus on engaging nations in the developing world, paying particular attention to the need to provide multilingual access to ICANN records. Second, the Board, working with the GAC, should establish a process to determine when and how ICANN engages senior government officials on public policy issues on a regular and collective basis to complement the existing GAC process."*

> ATRT2 Recommendation 6.7 -- *"Recommends that the Board work jointly with the GAC, through the Board-GAC Recommendation Implementation (BGRI) working group, to regularize senior officials' meetings by asking the GAC to convene a High Level meeting on a regular basis, preferably at least once every two years. Countries and territories that do not currently have GAC representatives should also be invited and a stock-taking after each High Level meeting should occur."*

Recent Developments

The GAC recently held two committee-wide calls and circulated preliminary topics for GAC input and review. This collaborative effort, which included representatives of the host Rwanda government and ICANN Government Engagement (GE) staff resulted in the following topic list shared with meeting invitees:

> 1. *Introductory Session/Scene Setting/Context*:
> Overview discussion of ICANN and the Multistakeholder Model - including ICANN's evolution, the role of the GAC, and accomplishments of the multistakeholder community over the last 25 years, references to emerging technologies that may impact future DNS policy development and a general overview of the HLGM agenda/program.

> 2. *Cooperation and Governance:*

Discussion of the future of Internet governance (e.g., Global Digital Compact, WSIS+20, Summit for the Future). This topic area will highlight ICANN's role in the ecosystem and provide for discussion of such topics as cybersecurity, DNS abuse, internet fragmentation and the value of a single internet ecosystem. This topic area will also enable exploration of how the ITU, ICANN and the UN can bring various policy programs together to help governments deliver on their national aspirations.

3. *Digital Inclusion:*
Potential discussion of open Internet and meaningful connectivity, internationalized domain names (IDNs) & Universal Acceptance, multilingualism, new round of generic top level domains applications, country code top level domains (ccTLDs), and the development of "digital economies" in Africa and other underserved regions (e.g., Coalition for Digital Africa).

The GAC scheduled a third call in late February to discuss a draft preliminary agenda for the HLGM. The results of that discussion will frame the conversation at ICANN79 with the goal of producing a crystalized agenda by the end of the meeting week.

Key Reference Documents

- ICANN Accountability and Transparency Review Program -
  https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=20611100
- GAC Guidelines for High Level Government Meetings -
  https://gac.icann.org/meeting-services/guidelines-for-high-level-government-meetings
- GAC ICANN80 HLGM Page -
  https://gac.icann.org/activity/icann80-high-level-government-meeting
- GAC ICANN63 HLGM Page -
  https://gac.icann.org/sessions/icann63-high-level-governmental-meeting-hlgm

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