
ICANN 57: Summary of High Interest Topic Cross-Community Session – Exploring the Public Interest Within ICANN's Remit

To follow is a summary of the High Interest Topic (HIT) session held at ICANN57, Hyderabad (on Sunday 6 November, 2016).

This summary has been prepared by the independent ACIG GAC Secretariat for the information of ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC).

It is **not** a formal record of the meeting.

Transcript: http://schr.ws/hosted_files/icann572016/91/I57%20HYD_Sun06Nov2016-Exploring%20Public%20Interest-en.pdf

EURALO Thesis Paper Public Interest:
http://schr.ws/hosted_files/icann572016/34/EURALO_Thesis-paper_Public-Interest.pdf

Panellists

GAC Representatives who are interested in finding out more about this topic may wish to approach the session panellists.

Session Chaired by Olivier Crepin-Leblond, Chair of European At-Large Organisation (EURALO) at ICANN and Co-Chair of the CCWG on Internet Governance.

Panellists:

- Wolf Ludwig, EURALO
- Rajesh Chharia, Internet Service Provider Association of India, Board Member APNIC
- Jonathon Robinson, Former Chair of the GNSO Council
- Becky Burr, ICANN Board Member
- Thomas Schneider, GAC Chair

Summary of Discussions

Throughout the session, participants shared information and views. No formal position, or possible next steps (action items), were agreed or discussed.

Some of the issues discussed included:

- The long history (within ICANN) of attempts to define 'public interest' without ever reaching a consensus definition or position.
- The difficulties of defining 'public interest' in a globally applicable manner.
- The issue of public interest being a key issue for the IANA stewardship transition and the subsequent new Bylaws and governance structures.
- The words 'public interest' and 'global public interest' are mentioned a total of 10 times in the new bylaws but are not defined.

Individual panellists argued that:

- Public interest equates with public participation in policy-making.
- Public interest is "sometimes something you have a feel for." But it is difficult to apply an absolute test.
- Examples of public interest activity with the current ICANN environment include:
 - Supporting the stability and security of the DNS;
 - Developing best practices in multi-stakeholder systems; and
 - Enhanced participation.
- Public interest cannot be described in the abstract – it is very context specific.
- Public interest must be bounded by ICANN's mission and a well-run policy development process that is supported by consensus should be definition serve the public interest. You don't then need a definition.
- Governments are used to taking decisions that are in the public interest at all levels – community, regional, national and global.
- It is important to have a process that allows all elements of the public interest to be identified and considered. What those elements are, and who the appropriate stakeholders might be, is likely to change according to the situation.
- While individual GAC members might act in his/her national interests, the committee works together to act in the global interest.

Document Administration

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