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ICANN79 | CF – GAC Discussion: New gTLD Program Next Round (1 of 2)  
Sunday, March 3, 2024 – 1:15 to 2:30 SJU

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right, should we start? Recording in progress. Hello and welcome to the GAC discussion on the new gTLD program next round on Sunday 3rd of March at 17:15 UTC. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN expected standards of behavior. During this session, questions or comments submitted in the chat will be read aloud if put in the proper form. Remember to state your name and the language you will speak in case you will be speaking a language other than English. Please speak clearly and at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation. And please make sure to mute all other devices when you are speaking. You may access all available features for this session in the Zoom toolbar. With that I will hand the floor over to GAC Vice Chair Nigel Hickson. Over to you Nigel.

NIGEL HICKSON: Yes, thank you very much and good afternoon to people here and good morning, good afternoon, good evening to people joining us on Zoom. I hope you've all had a nice lunch. Mine is on the front table there so I might disappear and have some lunch later on. You won't notice any difference at all. Anyway, good to see everyone and we've got a packed agenda. So we're going to go fairly swiftly through it because you might well have questions as well. This is the first session on SubPro or new

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gTLDs and we've got a second one later in the afternoon as well. So if we can go to our agenda, well let's go to our heading slide.

Right, so the agenda is we're going to talk about applicant support. It says 30 minutes there. It's a mistake. It should say 20 minutes but Ros knows that. We've then got the implementation review team and we're going to have an update on that work. And then we're going to discuss cost benefit of new gTLDs. So the bulk is on agenda item two and three. So if we can go to the next slide.

So I'm just going to give a very quick update on the... I'll take my glasses off. Yeah, that's much better, isn't it? Right, so this is the new gTLD team that we've been talking about. As you know, there is a lot of work going on in terms of the SubPro process and this includes policy development processes. Obviously, we've had the main recommendation on SubPro but there's going to be some further policy development process. The implementation review team, which we'll be hearing from later, there's public comment proceedings on the work of the IRT and the applicant guidebook. Across communities, small teams looking at specific issues, community consultation process and drafting teams. So this is a real challenge and we've been very, very grateful for the work of a number of GAC representatives in taking this work forward. But the aim as we go forward is to have collective courage from GAC members in all the priority topics. So we can go to the next slide.

So essentially we're going to have a sort of more collegiate approach to this because there's just so much work and we're indebted to the work that Jason Merritt has been taking forward from Canada and Jorge Cancio, our good friend from Switzerland, has been taking forward. And

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there was a recent call for volunteers from the GAC and I'm very pleased to note that we had people coming forward, Tiago from Colombia, Ros from the UK and Ken Ying from Chinese Taipei. So they'll join Jason as a sort of, Jason will be a chair of this little small group that will be taking forward some of these initiatives. And no doubt as we go forward in the next 18 to 24 months on this work, there'll be need for other volunteers to come forward. So don't think that just because we've got these wonderful volunteers they're going to do all the work. There'll be other work as well. We want everyone committed to this SubPro process. This is very important for ICANN, it's very important for us as a GAC. We played a fundamental role, the GAC, in shaping the 2012 round and we're playing a very active role now as well. So please do get involved. Next slide.

GAC discussion on applicant support. I'll hand over to Ros, my great UK colleague.

ROSALIND KENNYBIRCH:

Thank you so much, Nigel, and thank you, colleagues, for joining us here after lunch. If we could go to the next slide, please. Thanks. So I know we've heard a lot from me this morning, so I'm going to endeavor to hand over to my colleagues, Tracy Hackshaw and Nigel Cassimire, during this session to provide some further reflections from other perspectives and allow ample time for a chance for you to feed in your views in a cross-GAC discussion. Next slide, please.

So I just wanted to start off the session with a couple of historical reflections, just so that we can see just how far back the GAC and the wider ICANN community has been talking about the Applicant Support

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Program. In 2006, the GNSO Council New gTLD Committee stated that there is merit in graduated application fees, and that was one of the first comments surrounding the potential of an Applicant Support Program, and that was all the way back in 2006. So I think that really shows us just for how long this concept has been around and for how long it's been of interest to the ICANN community.

The GAC has also, of course, long taken an interest in the issue of applicant support. For example, in 2009, the GAC advocated for an Applicant Support Program, noting that a single fee structure creates limitations, notably by skewing the market in favor of applications from the developed world and those with significant financial resources. So that was a quote from 2009 from the GAC. So I think, again, that just goes to show how long this conversation has been around. Then if we could go ahead to the GGP slide, the GNSO guidance process slide, please.

So with those historical reflections in mind, and fast-forwarding to now, a variety of efforts have been underway to create a successful ASP for the upcoming application round for new gTLDs. For example, in August 2022, the GNSO Council approved the GGP initiation request to provide additional guidance to support the eventual implementation efforts relating to the Applicant Support Program. I'll now turn to my colleague, Tracy Hackshaw, to talk a little bit more about the efforts of this group and the outcomes. And in this context, it's worth also noting that the board is... the ICANN board is in the process of considering the GGP's final report. But over to you, Tracy, to offer reflections here. Thank you.

TRACY HACKSHAW:

Thank you, Ros. And I don't want to go through the entire GGP report here, because we don't have time for that. But there are a couple of points I think we should be mindful of in this, and some of it came up in the At-Large discussion. One of which is the discussion around setting targets for the Applicant Support Program. And you would have heard if you were in the earlier session that while the GAC may have wanted a larger figure, the figure of 10 was approved as the target that we would be happy with in ICANN. One of the things I think we need to be cognizant of is that target of 10 sufficient to achieve the diversity that we are talking about. Would it be seen as successful if we have only 10 applicants, and even if those 10 and within the 10 less get approved, would that be seen as successful?

The other thing I wanted to call out in this list, again, is quite... I think there are... how many is it? Nine recommendations? Seven? Nine recommendations, yeah. So instead of going through all nine, I wanted to call out the other one that I am interested in, which is the communication awareness recommendation. And essentially this says that we as the community and as ICANN Org need to really drive the communication and awareness program to a level that it wasn't done before. The guidance that was given was to target potential applicants from a not-for-profit sector, social enterprises, and/or community organizations from underserved and developing regions and countries. They should not exclude any entities from outreach efforts, such as private sector entities from underserved and developing regions and countries, recognizing the goal is to get as many qualifying applicants as possible.

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Now, they set out quite a few indicators of success, but they're not numerate. The quantitative measures, related to conversion rates, proportional industry standards, for online campaigns and in-person events, with specific metrics and pre-agreed to be determined in consultation with ICANN Org communications and applicable contractors. What I wanted to point out here is that having said all of this, it's incumbent upon us as the community, as the GAC members, as the wider community, to work alongside the organization ICANN Org to ensure that communications and outreach is done at your community level, especially in those regions, underserved and developing regions, in Africa, Caribbean, Pacific, and others, where the DNS industry is not seen as being very vibrant or non-existent in many cases. So I wanted to ensure that you all are cognizant of that recommendation, and to take that forward to your communities and to your particular governments, as the case may be, or at capitals, if in fact that you can help the overarching outreach program, and to work alongside ICANN Org in ensuring that that is successful. I know we're running out of time, Ros, I wanted to make a stop there for a moment and see if there's anything else you wanted to add, or in terms of the GGP report. Thanks.

ROSALIND KENNYBIRCH: Thank you so much, Tracy. I think that covers it off really well. I think just to signpost again too that the Board will be considering this report, so definitely we'll all need to stay tuned for that feedback as well. So just to signpost there again as well, but thank you so much, Tracy. And if we could move to the next slide, please. Great, thank you so much. So in addition to the GAC's work through the GGP, the GAC has also been involved with the SubPro IRT track, or sub-track I should say, on the

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Applicant Support Program. And through this sub-track, we have worked collaboratively across the ICANN community to produce a draft Applicant Support Handbook. This is now out to the community for feedback through public comment, which is a really excellent opportunity for the GAC to really meaningfully look at this handbook and provide our own feedback.

Also, the GAC's own small team on the Applicant Support Program, we've been meeting since ICANN 78 really productively, I think, has been discussing this handbook as well as bigger picture goals for the Applicant Support Program through a series of meetings since ICANN 78. And if you are interested in contributing to this small team, getting further involved in the effort, please do let me know. We'd love to hear from a variety of diverse perspectives.

Now, I'll bring in Nigel Cassimire for his reflections on the handbook and the wider goals of the Applicant Support Program. So, over to you, Nigel. Thank you.

NIGEL CASSIMIRE:

Thank you very much, Ros. If we could just go back to slide number 10 for a second, please. Right. This is a history slide. And from the last round, if you look at the key features of the Applicant Support Framework, number four, one was access to pro bono services, two was financial assistance through fee reductions, and three was promotional efforts. I don't think, in terms of the handbook and the approaches we are taking right now, that we've added any new dimensions to this. So, for us to get better results, we have to do better in all of the things that

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we are doing here. So, we talked about pro bono services, expanding the range, the quality, the reach of the pro bono services.

Financial assistance, that is going to need some funding. I can tell you from my experience in the last round with our Caribbean region, even the fee reduction of \$47,000 US dollars was difficult for persons to make a business case for. And that price has gone up. So, one would have to ensure that there is adequate funding to address these fee reductions that are envisaged. And the third point is the promotional efforts, and Tracy talked about that. The examples that are given here, website, guidebook, fact sheets, and so on, which are fine, but we need to do more to equip qualified applicants to come forward. And they have to have the knowledge, they have to have the funding, they have to have the business case, or the support to make a sustainable case. So, this is when one looks at the guidebook that is in circulation now. And it was noted this morning that there were some aspects of it that are color coded, showing parts of it or elements of it that still require input or are still under consideration. I think those are the areas that we need to focus on as far as the GAC is concerned. Funding is key, clearly. Tracy did mention, if we want to do greater outreach, we have to spend some more money to get out there. If we want to support diversity and so on, we're going to have to put—the target of 10, for example, 10 qualified applicants. Is that a sufficient number for us to consider a success? But of course, if you go higher than 10, it would mean that the program would need more funding. So we have to find a good balance in that whole thing.

So what I'm saying is that we are all encouraged, go to the applicant guidebook that's out there for public comment, think through these

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things and let us try to come up with some appropriate inputs so that we can get better results as far as diversity and outreach and qualified applicants from the underserved areas better than the last time. Thanks, Ros.

ROSALIND KENNYBIRCH:

Thank you so much, Nigel. So just before we hand it over to colleagues to provide their reflections and inputs as well, I'd just really like to again highlight opportunities for GAC colleagues to engage and help work to ensure that the applicant support program is successful. So again, there is a public comment opportunity out on the draft applicant support handbook. This will be an important chance for the GAC to share its views on how the handbook can be further improved before finalization, bearing in mind the challenges and opportunities we've reviewed in the sessions today. So please do look out for that opportunity, and it would be a great chance to work collaboratively on putting together some strong, useful feedback from the GAC.

Secondly, as has emerged from this morning's session, the GAC and ALAC are highly aligned and invested in the success of the applicant support program. We hope to use ICANN 79 as a jumping off point for further collaboration, including pursuing a joint ALAC-GAC communication, highlighting the points we have discussed today. So we see that as another great opportunity to collaborate across our multi-stakeholder community on this. I think, yep, Nigel wanted to come in on one last thing, so I'll bring him in, and then we'll open the floor to others for contributions and comments. Thank you.

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NIGEL CASSIMIRE: I just remembered I wanted to say I was looking forward to what Nigel would come with later in the agenda, where he's talking about the business aspects of the gTLD, because that is the type of information I think would be very valuable to the underserved areas. Thanks.

ROSALIND KENNYBIRCH: Thank you, Nigel. Great point. All right. Yeah, back to Nigel for colleagues to come in.

NIGEL HICKSON: There's too many Nigels, aren't there? Ros, before we just take questions, could we just go back to number 12, which I think we're on? And I just wanted to reflect on this slide the date for comments on this Applicant Support Program Handbook. I think it's very important, as was noted before and as has just been noted by our colleagues, that all GAC members take a chance to look at this. This is a significant achievement by a team of incredibly hard-working volunteers, and I think we should be very proud of our GAC colleagues that have helped put this together with the help of ICANN.org. And also for the real work that went on the guidance process. Again, incredible work. I'll take a couple of questions and then we'll go on to the IRT process itself. So I think in the queue we had Kavouss and then I think Switzerland. Is that right? There will be hopefully time for questions at the end, but I want to keep things moving along. So first of all, Kavouss, good afternoon, sir.

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KAVOUSS ARASTEH: Good afternoon, sir. I have a question. Maybe I misunderstood. What is this \$2 million fund? Is it the only fund available for this support or is in addition to any traditional or anything, we have \$2 million as well? Could you quickly clarify that? And then I have a suggestion. Thank you.

ROSALIND KENNYBIRCH: Thank you very much for that great question, Kavouss. I don't think I quite picked up just because of a poor signal all of the question. But just to say that this \$2 million fund is intended to help support and account for the reduction in application fees for the applicant support program. My colleague, Tracy or Nigel, may wish to expound. Apologies, I didn't catch all of that. But I think the point you're getting at and mentioned really astutely this morning is that it is important to keep in mind whether this is going to be a sufficient amount to achieve that. Especially looking over the course of economic developments over the last decade and factors like inflation. So I think this is something that we could be looking to expand. But yeah, just to bring in others on that point, if they want to come in.

TRACY HACKSHAW: I think it's also important that, as we said this morning, we don't yet have visibility into exactly the actual quantum. \$2 million is a figure that we've heard a lot about, but it's not as far as we know, set in stone as yet, one way or the other. And we don't actually know specifically what it's going to be used for as yet. We haven't seen it. So we are speculating that will be done to offset fees and so on. But we don't know officially that's what it's going to be used for yet. So I think the jury is still out on

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that. But based upon the last round, we're making assumptions. That's what's to be used for.

NIGEL HICKSON: Thank you. Thank you so much. And thank you, Kavouss, for that. Did you have—

KAVOUSS ARASTEH: Excuse me, Nigel. Can I have one small follow up question or comment?

NIGEL HICKSON: Yes, please go ahead.

KAVOUSS ARASTEH: Yes, I was attending the group which is dealing with the auction. Fortunately, we have Marika Konings at this meeting with us. At that meeting, there were some discussions that perhaps part of the auction available money could be considered for applicant support. It was not followed because there was no other people at the meeting supporting that idea. There were many other people. In fact, they were not in the category of eligible, being eligible for support, but they pushed for some other things. I would like to know that whether that possibility could not be further explored. Because I don't think that this would be sufficient. Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON: Thank you very much for that, Kavouss. I think that's probably beyond the panel here to answer that question. But as you say, we do have the

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benefit of having representatives from ICANN Org led by Marika in the session in a second. So they might well be able to address that later. Jorge, over to you.

JORGE CANCIO:

Thank you. Thank you, Nigel. Jorge Cancio, Switzerland for the Record. It feels a bit strange not to be on the podium with you on new gTLDs, but I'm happy to see this topic in such able and capable hands. So thanks very much for taking on the baton. Regarding the question of ASs, applicant support program and public comment period, did I understand you correctly that you are suggesting that GAC members individually file a comment or are you intending to prepare a draft comment from the GAC as a whole, which would be very advisable? Thank you.

ROSALIND KENNYBIRCH:

Thank you so much to Switzerland for the opportunity to clarify. Yes, we would be envisioning the latter. So a collaborative GAC comment and hopefully our thinking is that ICANN 79 would be a good place to exchange ideas through our sessions today and then use that as a launching off point to develop a collaborative GAC response to the public comment. So thank you very much for allowing the opportunity for clarification there. Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you very much indeed. Okay, let's go on to the second part. This isn't the last we're going to discuss the applicant support program.

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We'll have other opportunities. Sorry. I think that's an old hand from Kavouss, isn't it?

KAVOUSS ARASTEH:

No, no, that's not old. That's a new hand in reply to the GAC collective actions. I don't think nothing prevents any GAC member in addition to that collective reaction to act individually. I don't think anything prevents them. So we encourage GAC members to also, because I don't know the fate of that collective yet. So I think it is not prevented. Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you very much for that clarification, Kavouss. And as I said at beginning of this session, we certainly want all GAC members and observers to be able to look at this document and indeed provide comments so there can be a collective input. But yeah, indeed it's gone out for public consultation. So we need reactions to it. Thank you very much for that. And thank you so much to our colleagues. Can I welcome to the stage, it's an absolute pleasure. Can we do a talk show? It's like a chat show or something. I've always wanted to do one of those American things. Have you had a nice time here and are you enjoying yourself? So far so good. No, it's a pleasure. I'll get our colleagues from ICANN to introduce themselves a minute. But before they do perhaps, so this session is in sort of two or three parts. We're going to go over the IRT process and some of the other associated issues that are taking place now, as I indicated earlier, now and up to the beginnings of the applicants support round in 2026. But before Marika and Lars perhaps do their session, Rida is from Canada, who's a colleague of Jason.

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Jason, as you know, has been spearheading this work, a lot of this work on the IRT. He's been the GAC rep in the IRT process and can't be with us in person at this meeting, but Rida's going to say a few words. Thank you.

RIDA TAHIR:

Thank you so much, Nigel. My name is Rida Tahir from Canada. I'll be providing a short update on some procedural developments that have happened in the implementation review team. So before we begin, maybe I'll start with a little overview of what the IRT is for new GAC members and to refresh everyone's memory. The SubPro IRT is a cross community group responsible for drafting the implementation guidelines for the recommendations contained in everyone's favorite document, the SubPro final report. And the output of the group will be the applicant guidebook in preparation for the next round of GTLDs.

The IRT commenced its work in May 2023 and is expected, yes, to deliver the final applicant guidebook. We have an appointed GAC representative and an alternate to participate in the process. So the GAC member appointed to the IRT is Canada, which Jason is the one who fills that role with my support. And our alternate is UK, who's on the table with us today. Since ICANN 78, the IRT has met approximately 22 times and we met yesterday in person and will meet another two times in person while here at ICANN 79 to continue our work with the policy development.

Very exciting news, in February we posted our first tranche of topics available for the public comment proceedings. This public comment period will seek input from the ICANN community on proposed

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language for the applicant guidebook in the new round. So everyone is welcome to take a look at that public comment period of proceeding that's currently available to provide input and for review. Could I get the next slide, please?

Great. So first in a series of proceedings seeking input on the applicant guidebook are a number of topics, which I'll cover in a second. There's about seven of them that we've been working on over the last year or so of being in this process. You'll see them in front of you. So that's predictability framework, topic two, code of conduct, conflict of interest, applicant freedom of expression, universal acceptance, reserved and blocked names and geographic names.

The public comment period is closing relatively soon here. We still have some time, but it will be finishing on March 19th. So I encourage everyone to take a look at that as soon as they can. And we welcome GAC members to submit input into the public comment proceeding at this time. So I think that's it for the update from me. I'm happy to pass it over to Marika and Lars for some more information about the IRT. Thanks.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you so much, Rida, for that and very grateful. And it's been a pleasure to serve alongside Jason in some of this IRT work, really, really good work. And I'll hand it over to, would you like to introduce yourselves first?

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MARIKA KONINGS:

Sure. Thank you very much, Nigel. Hi, everyone. My name is Marika Konings. I'm ready with ICANN actually since 2008, but have been working for most of the time in support of the GNSO and there had the pleasure as well working, for example, with the Kavouss on a number of topics, but I recently joined the new gTLD program team. If we go to the next slide, you can see what recently happened. And maybe just to start off, we definitely will be talking about the IRT and the work that's happening there, but obviously the implementation of the program consists of more than just the IRT. So we thought it might be helpful as well to talk to you a little bit about the recent changes we've made in relation to the governance model and how we're working to make sure we get all the pieces in place to be able to deliver the program in a timely and transparent manner.

So I was appointed to this role in November of last year, together with Lars, who was already closely involved in this work and together with Julie Hoffmeister, who has joined us as a consultant and who has extensive experience in managing large-scale projects that she has done for a number of big companies and organizations. We now form the leadership team for the program, so it's our role to make sure everything runs on time. We work with the community on the different pieces of policy that need to be implemented, but also make sure that on the internal side we have all the systems and staff in place to manage the program once we're able to open the round.

So when we came on board, we spent quite a bit of time making sure that we have our internal organization in place, making sure that for the different work streams that exist, the different projects as well as the functional support, we have leadership in place and project managers

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in place that make up this cross-functional team that really runs across the whole ICANN organization. You can go to the next slide.

So as part of this new leadership team coming in place and basically moving the program to the next phase of work, because obviously a lot of work had already gone into planning, I think you've hopefully all seen the implementation plan that was shared I think last July with the community that at a high level outlined everything that needed to be done to get the program up and running. We're kind of now moving into that next phase of the detailed programming, really the planning, really from a bottom up looking at the scope of each of the work that needs to be done in each of the areas, the schedule against which we're planning to deliver on these different milestones and activities, the resources we need in order to be able to deliver on that plan, and as well any kind of third party resources we may need. And based on the work that we're currently doing, we expect to be able to roll that up in an overall program timeline, including identification of the critical path, as well as any dependencies that exist both internally but also externally, and I think you know, and Lars will be speaking a bit more about that, there are a number of dependencies as well that sit with the community that need to be addressed before we can get to the finish line on this.

We do anticipate that this roll-up will help us well in time for the next ICANN meeting to provide a much more granular level of reporting of progress, if we can go to the next slide. Again, this is just a mock up, but again it gives a bit of an indication of where we're hoping to go, again this much more detailed level where the community can see where do we stand on these different items, you know, where do we have potential challenges and risks, and how can we mitigate those so we

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can continue delivering on what we set out to do. I think that's all I had at this stage.

Oh, just one more, just a brief reminder as well on the timeline we're working against, and this was also something that we shared in the implementation plan of last July, this is all based on the assumption that we'll need two years to get to a final applicant guidebook, during which of course work is already underway on planning and preparing to operate the round, but some of the work can only be done once we have kind of the final directions on what the guidance looks like and what the applicant guidebook looks like. So our assumption is that after finalization of the AGB, we'll still need one year to make sure we're ready to open the application submission period, which basically means that we're currently working towards a target date for the opening of the application window of April 2026. I think that's all I had, and I'll hand it over to Lars. I'm happy as well, maybe Lars can run through this, and then of course happy to take any questions, or however you want to run it, Nigel, sorry.

NIGEL HICKSON:

No, no, no, you're the expert. No, I thought we'd have Lars speaking, we'll get to the end of this session and then take questions. So Lars, please.

LARS HOFFMANN:

Thank you, Nigel. Thank you, everyone. Thanks for having us. My name is Lars Hoffmann. I've been with ICANN also for a little bit, not as long as Marika. I think I joined in 2013. I've been working in the policy team. I

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dabbled in reviews, and I've been with GDS working on SubPro, and now the next round, I think since 2020. One of my jobs at the moment is to work with the IRT and get us an applicant guidebook, as Marika just said, by 2024. So I'm going to talk about that work in this context for your benefit. There's a little bit of overlap with what Rida already presented, so I'm not going to go through those topics again. You saw them before. There's other public comments out as well at the moment that are relevant to the program. I think the session before, you talked about the applicant support program, what is forthcoming in the next couple of weeks is also the registry service provider evaluation and the registry system testing handbooks and documents, and they will also be posted for public comment this month.

I said this to the council earlier as well on the public comments, and there's going to be a couple of more slides towards the end of the presentation on this. The IRT is kind of packaging the different topics into three packages, I guess, and all three will go out for public comment this year. I'll go through the other topics later on in the presentation. This is the first bite at the public comment apple, as it were. There will be another public comment of the entire applicant guidebook when it's drafted, currently foreseen in May 2025. But we would really encourage everybody to try and review the documents now, especially if there's any red flags that you see, so that we can discuss any concerns that are raised by the community with the IRT. We still have time left. If those comments only appear next year, in May 2025, on the final AGB, they will be similarly considered. You'll just help the IRT and us out meeting the timeline if you'd raise the comments in

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the public comment fora that are opening this year. The next slide, please.

A couple of slides, what happened with the policy implementation with the AGB drafting since Hamburg. Public comment was launched, spoke about the whole AGB going out in 2025. There's also the community consultation going on on PICs and RVCs, public interest commitments and registry voluntary commitments. There's a plenary session on Monday after the opening ceremony, I think Monday is tomorrow, where that topic will be discussed. The board has reached out to the community or had reached out to the community in December last year, asking for some input on how the PICs and RVCs can be implemented. And hopefully, well, not hopefully, I'm pretty sure there's going to be a lively and productive discussion tomorrow around that. Nigel, you'll make sure of that, I'm sure. The next slide, please.

Another issue the closed generic topic. The GAC had issued advice on that, and I think the At-Large Advisory Committee as well, or at least expressed concerns around that on closed generics. And the board acted on the advice and noted that closed generic gTLD applications will not be permitted until such time as there is an approved methodology and criteria to evaluate whether or not a proposed closed domain is in the public interest. And I don't have to tell you, the GAC, obviously the public interest component here stems from the advice from Beijing from the last round, obviously. So in layman's terms, no closed generics in the next round. That's, I think, the message taken away from here. We'll work with the IRT to have that reflected appropriately in the applicant guidebook. The next slide, please.

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We have a work plan for the IRT. We've updated it a couple of times. There's a lot of balls in the air, a lot of problems that we are solving with the community to get the applicant guidebook ready. And so planning everything out in detail was a little bit difficult. And so we agreed with the IRT to update our work plan and to refine the planning as we go along. So we just published the third iteration of this implementation plan, the work plan essentially for the IRT. The timeline has not changed. And the new governance model, Marika spoke about it, has been included. Dependencies have been updated. GAC advice on closed generics, as I just said, obviously has been dealt with now. And the board resolutions on the recommendations that happened last year are also now reflected in the work plan. Obviously, 10 recommendations, you see that here, the half circle, semi-circle, reflects the outputs in the final report. And 10 of those outputs, 10 of the recommendations were not adopted by the board. I think most of you will be aware that the GNSO Council has formed a small team. They are currently in the process of working through supplemental recommendations. And we expect those to be completed in April, according to the small team's timeline. The council will then presumably review that and maybe resolve on that in April as well. So then hopefully it will be before the board in Kigali. The next slide, please.

This is the timeline high level for the public comments and the publication of the applicant guidebook. And that's also reflected in the work plan. You see this year the public comment is out at the moment. There's a second public comment. I'm going to go through the topics in a second later this year. And then the third public comment in December this year. We'll then work through all those public comments

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with the IRT and hopefully have a full draft of topics that all have gone through for public comment once already in May. And then the entire document will go out for public comment, essentially giving a second round of public comments on all the topics that are contained in the applicant guidebook.

Which then brings us to board approval no later than December. It's a bit of a vague date, obviously, but it depends a little bit on what the public comment feedback is in May, how quickly we can work through that, and how quickly we can then bring it to the board for their consideration. If the board resolves on this earlier, then the publication of the applicant guidebook may also happen before December. We have this in here with a December timeline. Some of you may know there's a policy recommendation out that the applicant guidebook needs to be published at least four months before the next round opens. And that we are currently planning for April 26. And so here's the math. April minus four gives you December 25. So that's the date we're working towards. Next slide, please.

I promise you I'm almost done. We can do one more. We've seen this twice, I think, already, those topics. One more slide. So just a quick overview of the topics for the next two public comment rounds. I'm not going to read through all of these. I think the slides are available. The first three topics have a tick next to them because the IRT has discussed these already. There's discussion ongoing on the next three topics there. And then the final four rows give you an overview of the topics and an approximate timeline when we expect that to be discussed with the IRT. Incidentally, topic number 20, application change request, will be discussed for the first time here in Puerto Rico. I forgot for a second

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where we were. In Puerto Rico on Wednesday, doing the IRT meeting there. The next slide, please.

This is the batch number three. I think there's some high interest topics for the GAC here as well, auctions being one of them, community applications, and PICs and RVCs as well. Those will all be brought to the IRT in the second half of this year and then go out for public comment in December. The next slide, please. I think this last slide, the dependencies that are still outstanding to get everything done, we're hoping to resolve these in the coming months. I spoke about the supplemental recommendations that the council will be considering most likely in April on those recommendations that the board had not adopted.

Then there is the completion of the IDN of the IDN EPDP phase one. That is completed, but the recommendations are before the board. We expect the board to consider those, if not here, then at the next meeting of the board. IDN EPDP phase two is listed here because it's not done yet. Our current working assumption is that it's actually not a dependency, that the recommendations there will not have an impact on the applicant guidebook. We list this here and we're in touch with our policy colleagues, and as well as with the community members who work on the IDN EPDP. If something does come up in that discussion that may affect the applicant guidebook, then obviously it would become a dependency. Everybody's aware of that and we don't expect that to have an impact on the timeline.

There's the NCAP study two. I think that's also out for public comment at the moment. We expect that to be delivered to the board in May, so

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that hopefully gives us the time. No, if it's delivered in May, it'll give us the time to incorporate that into the applicant guidebook according to the timetable. Name collision was on the previous slide, so we have that timed out. Then there's board action outstanding. You will be keenly aware on the GAC advice on auctions. Also applicant support. The closed generic has actually already been dealt with. And then there's some SSAC advice and then the framework for the PICs and RVCs that I spoke about as well come to the plenary on Monday. And once that little list is worked through, then we are ready to go. I think that's the end of the slides, if I'm right. Yes, thank you so much. Open for questions.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you so much, Lars and Marika, for running through that. I know there's an awful lot of material there and an awful lot of work. Let's just draw breath before we go on to the GAC topics of interest highlights. Yeah, I think, did I say that? Yes, thank you so much. So, Kavouss, do you want to ask a quick question? I want to try and keep this to two or three minutes.

KAVOUSS ARASTEH:

Two quick questions, Nigel, if you allow me. One is, how many GAC people are in the IRT? Simple. Second, a comment that you personally may not agree, but I am not optimistic about the closed generic. Because methodology, maybe, but criteria to comply with the public interest is very difficult, because the issue of public interest from the outset some 20 years ago is subjective. It's very difficult to have a criteria. But good luck.

LARS HOFFMANN: Thank you, Kavouss. The acoustic wasn't great until I realized it's much better with the headphones. But I think your first question was on how many GAC members are in the IRT. Elisa sits in the back and was able to figure that out immediately. 14 is the answer to that. Nigel, obviously, being one of them. And I think if Elisa or somebody could maybe post a link to the wiki that has the membership up into the chat of the Zoom room, thumbs up, it's coming, so you'll get an overview for yourself. Kavouss, just very clear on the closed generic. So closed generics in the next round will not happen. That's what the board said with that statement. And it will only happen if and when the community comes up with those criteria. So our understanding is if the community does not come up with those criteria, then there will be no closed generics. At least my personal interpretation. I may be wrong, but that's how I read it. And I think that's how the IRT sees it at the moment as well. I hope that's helpful. Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON: Thank you very much. And yes, I think that's the confirmation of the board. We had GAC advice on this issue and we had confirmation from the board. Great. Okay, let's go on to the remaining slides on this issue, if we may. So we're on to GAC. So if we could have the next slide. Shall I do this or do you want to? No? Do you want to?

LARS HOFFMANN: I'm going to give it a go, Nigel.

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NIGEL HICKSON: Go on. You're better at talking than I am.

LARS HOFFMANN: We both know that is not true, Nigel. I mean, you're the one who's going to host the chat show here. Thanks. Yeah, so we just listed here a couple of topics that are of high interest from the GAC as determined by advice and prior discussions, etc. So we don't necessarily claim this is exhaustive, but I think it certainly captures most of the important or high interest topics. Geographic names, reserved and blocked names, both of these have language out for public comment at the moment as is the applicant guidebook now, the handbook here, the fourth bullet point. Language on GAC advice and GAC early warning is not out for public comment, but has been discussed with the IRT. GAC members attended those discussions and the language that has been finalized has kind of put aside so you can look up the language, but the IRT will not discuss this until it has now gone out for public comment. It's a very strict methodology, but we have 42 topics to get through in 24 months. And so that's the methodology we agreed with the IRT and for the time being it's, I think, working well. I'm going to say that myself, but Jeff is in the room. He doesn't seem to object, so that's a good sign.

And then the private resolution contents and sets, auctions, there was a dependency on the last slide. You saw that that is something that the board is aware of, obviously, and we're working with the experts, external experts on auctions as well. We expect that to lead to a language that we can work on and work with the IRT and share with the IRT, and that can also inform the board when it acts on the GAC advice, which I think, if I recall correctly, says that the private resolution of

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contention sets should be prohibited or strongly disincentivized. And so that is something that we're absolutely looking into as well, how that could be achieved. And we hope that that information then will also inform the board, obviously, when they consider the GAC advice.

And for the clarity, actually, because there's been some discussions on the list as well for the IRT, just as a reminder to everyone on private auctions, there's no policy on this. There's no policy that says there should be private auction or private resolution of contents and sets, nor is there policy language approved by the council that says there should not be. So that's from a policy standpoint where that topic stands.

I think then the next slide is a divider, and then there's just an overview, if you can go two slides down, of the sessions here at ICANN 79. For those with a time machine, there were two sessions yesterday. Then there is today's sessions. You definitely can put a tick on the second one. Tomorrow is the plenary, and I think also another IRT session. I don't think I know, because I'll be there. NCAP discussions are happening tomorrow as well. As I pointed out, that's a dependency. And then on the next slide, please, there is a session on string similarity, possibly also an interest to many of you. That language is already under discussion with the IRT as well. And then we have the GNSO small team on supplemental recommendations. One of them actually deals with the applicant support program, and another IRT working session where we'll be looking at change requests. I pointed that out earlier as well. And another small team session on Thursday. And that's really all from me in this case. Thank you very much.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you. Thank you so much for running through that. And thank you to you both for all your work. Jeff, Jeff Neuman is in the room. Do you want to stand up, Jeff? We don't want you to say anything. But we'll be seeing Jeff again later this week, so to speak, because Jeff works for the Generic Numbers Support Organization. And as you know, the GAC has liaisons to different parts of the community. As you know, we had a discussion with the ALAC this morning, and we're having a discussion with the GNSO later in the week. And Jeff has been an incredibly helpful sort of liaison to us. So he's in the room, and he's an absolute expert on anything to do with SubPro. So buy him a drink, and he'll tell you all about it.

Right. Without further ado, let's go on to the next slide. Perhaps you just go back one slide very quickly. Yeah, just here, there's all this information on what's going on on this process. But on to the next slide. Cost-benefit analysis of new gTLDs. Next slide, please. So this has been a very important area for the Government Advisory Committee, for individual government members, and I would say also for community members in general, to try and understand the real benefit of expanding the gTLD base. I mean, if we go back to 2012, before the last round in 2012, I think we had 22 generic top-level domains. And when the application round came in, there was no knowledge of how many names we'd end up with, whether it would be 500 or 1,000 or whatever. I think I'm right in saying, because I was a member of the ICANN staff at the time, that we had 1,762 applications or something like that in 2012. So it was a considerable expansion of the base.

And as you can see, in 2016, the GAC submitted advice to the Board about the desirability of having an objective and independent analysis

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of costs and benefits. 2016, of course, was the beginning of the policy development process of SubPro. And we followed that up in October 2023, thanks to an intervention from our distinguished colleague from Denmark. And that advice went to the Board in the October meeting in 2023 from Hamburg. And that's the advice there. So if we could go to the next slide, please.

And as we know from what has happened, we had some response from the ICANN Board. And GAC is considering how to sort of move forward in that area. But I think rather than me waffling on about this, I'll ask our distinguished colleague from Denmark just to make a very quick intervention on this issue. Thank you, Finn.

FINN PETERSEN:

Thank you, Nigel. Finn Pedersen from Denmark for the record. Thank you for highlighting the process. This has been quite a long time since we gave the advice in Helsinki. And we have followed it up a couple of times. And I have asked on different sessions, also the public sessions with which the Board have held and had the understanding that something was underway. And last time when we were in Hamburg, I asked whether we could have a comprehensive report to look at or links where we could find the information. And the ICANN Org have produced a document which they call the overview of the analysis related to cost and benefits for the next round. When one looks at the headings here, one can see it's not a cost-benefit analysis. It's not mentioned. It is related to. I have had the pleasure to read through the report and see whether it's a cost-benefit analysis and whether it's an objective and

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independent analysis. And I must say that my answer or reply to both of those questions would be no and a big no.

For my part, I cannot see that there's any kind of cost-benefit analysis in this. There might be detached costs. There might be detached benefits in very small area. But in order to conduct such a cost-benefit analysis, one should try to list all the benefits and all the costs, also looking from a global perspective. And after that, try to quantify those costs and benefits and come up with a kind of indication where the costs and benefits are to this process. I cannot see that done any place. There's no list of what is the benefit, what is the cost. One example could be defensive registration, what is the cost to IP holders for defending their rights. There's no estimation there. So from my point of view, no cost-benefit.

Is it then independent and objective? Well, the kind of elements in this have been prepared by the community, the community who was part of the first round and will be part of the next round, or the ICANN Org itself. So I cannot see in any way that it is an independent and objective analysis or whatever we should call this paper. I have expected and also from my government experience, when one do that analysis and that's a big job, but it's also a big project, then one normally go into contract with a professional company, which are used to do that on a big scale and have that. And my conclusion is this is not what the GAC asked us. So we are in a situation where the GAC have a consensus advice, the board have accepted it, but to my view, they haven't delivered anything useful. Thank you.

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NIGEL HICKSON:

No, well, thank you very much indeed, Finn. You explained it much better than I could have explained it. So this is an issue that the GAC will no doubt discuss when we start discussing how we're going to frame our communicate in terms of issues of importance and advice to the board. This is one element where we ask the board for something, as Finn said, and the board have come back and it's whether we need to follow up or whether we need to consider how we move forward in terms of perhaps asking for something slightly different in this respect.

We've only got another five or six minutes for questions on any issue related to the discussion that we've just taken place. I see Kavouss has got his hand up, Jorge's got his hand up. So we'll take about four or five questions and then we'll have to finish. And we are now, of course, coming back after the break and you will want to break. We're going to have a second session on the SubPro on the new gTLDs where we're focusing on RVCs and PICs, but we'll have an opportunity to touch on another couple of issues. So I do encourage you to enter into the dialogue at this stage. You saw the experts on the stage. You know Ros, you know Nigel, you know Tracy in terms of approaching them to talk about the applicant support, and that's been very helpful indeed. Rida would be very happy to talk to you about IRT issues and Jason is leading on that for Canada as we've heard. And we're very, very grateful to ICANN Org for going through this immensely complicated and thorough process. So Kavouss, very quick question, and Jorge.

KAVOUSS ARASTEH:

Yeah, very quick comment. I don't believe that we should further pursue this matter, cost and benefit analysis, because we have to do a cost and

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benefit analysis of the cost and benefit analysis. I don't think that this is—mission impossible. If there are consensus of GAC, that would not be a full consensus that we do not agree to further pursue this matter. We have asked that, answer was given. Some people, they said that it is not satisfactory. That is their views. While we may share that view, but we don't believe that we should pursue the matter to go to another GAC advice. Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you very much, Kavouss, and I'm sorry if I was suggesting. I was just trying to outline to the Government Advisory Committee potential options. It's obviously up to individual members how they take issues forward. Thanks for that. Jorge had his hand up as well.

JORGE CANCIO:

Thank you, Nigel, Jorge Cancio, Switzerland, for the record. On this question of the cost and the cost benefit analysis that should be objective and independent, I'm not sure whether we should perhaps take a little bit more time, also, of the second new gTLD session to discuss this, because it's really important. There are different layers to this. First is the question itself. So, have we received or not an objective and independent cost benefit analysis, which we called for in Helsinki seven or eight years almost ago? So, that's one layer of discussion.

The other layer, and I think there we go to the principles and to the governance and to the role of this committee. If we don't take our own advice seriously, who will do? So, yeah, we should talk about this, I think, rather seriously. And, of course, the Board can always decide not

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to heed GAC consensus advice. It's foreseen in the bylaws. They can decide to do so by 60% majority of the Board decision. It's foreseen in the bylaws. So, we should also de-dramatize this question, but have clarity. And if they are not in a position of delivering what we asked for, let us be clear on the question, and maybe they have good reasons for not being able to do so. So, yeah, that's my input before the break.

NIGEL HICKSON:

And I have good news for everyone. Good news for myself. I thought we had a break of 15 minutes. I was totally wrong. I've never been very good at adding up. We have a break of half an hour, and that's why I'm going to keep you talking for the next 15 minutes, just to make sure that you... No, seriously. Do we have any other questions before we go to the break? And thanks for the input so far. Any questions at all? Do feel free. Don't worry if the question, it can be as, you know... Well, any sort of question at all on SubPro. Any queries about it? And as I say, we will come back after the break, and we'll have another session. Okay. I think we're... Are we done? I can't see any questions. Any questions online? No. There's people waving from the back. Sorry? I do apologize.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Sorry, Nigel. For some reason, I'm not finding my online page here. No, just two comments. I think on what Jorge mentioned, I think that we should, first of all, I believe, come to understand if whether we do believe we have this assessment or not. I think it's an important topic. We are discussing 1,239 generic TLDs that have been granted. I don't know if in the past there was an agreement on the framework for conducting such a cost and benefit analysis. Perhaps that's something

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that was not out there, and just asking for an analysis and not giving much input from what you want. But I think that's an important issue.

The other thing I would suggest is, after that very comprehensive informative session we had earlier on, I think sometimes it might be a little bit confusing for some people where we are in each of the topics, because a lot of the discussion was on the application guidebook. It was a timeline for the application guidebook chapters. So a suggestion I would make is just to have a recap on which are the decisions, the topics that are still under consideration for a decision on the recommendations. So just a suggestion to make sure everybody knows where we are before we engage in discussion on PICs and voluntary restrictions. Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Yes, very important point and we can just summarize those. I think there was a slide that touched on that, but let's summarize that in a couple of minutes at the beginning of the next session. Kavouss, can we go to tea or did you have a further comment or question on this issue?

KAVOUSS ARASTEH:

No, one small question. Suppose that the result of cost and benefit analysis, if it is done by an independent so on so forth, if it shows that cost is much more than benefit, what do we do? We don't go to the second round? Doesn't make sense. That is not a logical approach. And we should know how much money we need if we want to push more and more to put and let us say [drill into the puppy] about the cost and benefit. If the result is negative, much more cost, then what we do? We

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stop something we've been waiting 13 years? I don't believe so. Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you very much. And we'll no doubt come back to this. But I think it's worth reflecting on that when we are government officials, when we tell our ministers that there is a new application round, as we've told our ministers, our ministers often ask us, and we might see this in when we have our discussions in Kigali with our high level ministers, they might well ask us, well, it's fantastic that there's going to be another round, but what's in it? What's in it for the economy? How do how does the economy, how does competition benefit from this? So there might be questions from our seniors. Okay, tea time.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**