



AT-LARGE ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE

Ex: AL.ALAC/ST.0309/3  
ORIGINAL: English  
DATE: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2009  
STATUS: FINAL

**Statement on At-Large Participation in ICANN**

At-Large Advisory Committee Statement

*Introductory Statement  
By the Staff of ICANN*

This statement is the result of a process begun when representatives of eighty-eight (88) At-Large Structures (“ALSes”) from five Regional At-Large Organizations (“RALOs”) representing ICANN’s global At-Large community met in the At-Large Summit (ATLAS) as a part of the 34th International ICANN meeting in Mexico City.

Amongst the various activities of the Summit were five working groups on issues of concern to the At-Large community. One of the five was devoted to the Participation of At-Large in ICANN.

The final statements of all five working groups was compiled into the [Declaration of the At-Large Summit](#), presented to the Board of ICANN at the Public Board Meeting in Mexico City.

In order to ensure that the entire At-Large community had the opportunity to review the five statements, and for their perspectives to be taken into account, the ALAC resolved upon a process of consultation and amendment for the statements [by resolution](#) at its 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009 teleconference. As a result, the Summit Working Group statement was [opened for public comments](#) by the At-Large community on 1<sup>st</sup> April, closing on 1<sup>st</sup> May. The Chair of the ALAC then requested the Staff to open a vote on the document, said vote opening on 8<sup>th</sup> May and closing on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

The results [were announced](#) on 16<sup>th</sup> May by the Staff, said result being that the Statement was endorsed by a vote of 11-0-0. The result may be verified under the following URL: <https://www.bigpulse.com/pollresults?code=jQmtjVrePkpDYQELXHg9>

This document has been translated from English in order to reach a wider audience. While the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the translation, English is the working language of ICANN and the English original of this document is the only official and authoritative text. You may find the English original at: <http://www.atlarge.icann.org/correspondence>

## **Background:**

The actual state of affairs shows a lack of effective participation from the At-Large community in the activities of ICANN.

The commitment and the participation of the different parts of the community require some previous knowledge of the things at stake in the issues being discussed. In order to improve the quality of the participation, it is important to explain the meaning and the limits of ICANN's mandate, the stakes and the impact sought for. The At-Large interaction with ICANN is vested in the ALAC Bylaws: (<http://www.icann.org/en/general/archive-bylaws/bylaws-15dec02.htm>).

A major awareness campaign across all the RALOs and the ALSes, in their respective languages, would be a first step towards this. Meaningful participation implies knowledge of the issues on which decisions must be taken. The means by which participation is effected are many and varied. They include email discussion lists, teleconferences, fora, videoconferences, electronic votes, wikis, blogs as well as face-to-face meetings. More traditional information and communication media can help reach a larger public of potential Internet users. A calendar that establishes the timing for community input is essential to stimulate a critical mass of participation. This calendar would allow more effective planning and optimal engagement of the community.

Even as we celebrate the diverse methods and tools available, we recognize that many challenges remain to be overcome for effective participation of users at the edge. Some are entirely technical and will improve with time. Others, however, will require commitment to improvement in interactions from all stakeholders, users included.

The next chapters will help highlight the preoccupations of the At-Large community. The recommendation in the following chapters will not cover all of the problems affecting participation of the individual Internet users, but will surely be of great importance to foster a greater involvement of end users in the future.

## ***I GENERAL PARTICIPATION***

The general participation is examined here at 5 different levels:

### **1) Participation in the GNSO**

Due to the highly technical nature of GNSO issues and their impact on users both as registrants and in ordinary, At-Large participation in the GNSO proceedings demands perhaps the heaviest investment in time and knowledge from participants. We therefore see the development of specialists on GNSO issues in At-Large as the optimal response. However, coming on the projected GNSO improvements, the GNSO has proposed collaboration with the ALAC in drafting a Registrant Bill of Rights. This development provides a timely opportunity for greater involvement of the wider At-Large community and is heartily embraced.

## **2) Advancing participation under the Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) policy**

We believe that the introduction of IDNs is a major step in the evolution of the Internet. As such, it deserves from ICANN a focused public awareness information campaign.

IDN policy is very important because the script is still an obstacle to participation in many parts of the world.

### **Recommendations:**

\* The funding of an adequate and timely public information campaign in collaboration with At-Large Structures should be included in the next budget. In order to execute an efficient information campaign, ICANN should consult regional ALSes for the most effective ways to reach communities and end users.

## **3) Participation of local communities**

We wish to promote more democratic participation. The facilitation of timely consultations is even more so. We know for a fact that we must produce documents in end-user-friendly language that clarify the issues to allow informed contributions from public consultations. Summaries of all important ICANN documents should be produced in the official UN languages.

Meaningful participation lies not only in the opportunity to express opinions and to vote, but in being prepared to contribute. The regional approach to ICANN policy development process is established through ALAC.

### **Recommendations:**

\* In order to guarantee effective results, we wish to insist once more upon the need for a face-to-face At-Large meeting in each region once a year. These regional meetings would enable the participants to identify and discuss the issues, important for each region of the At-Large community. We would welcome participation of other established ICANN constituencies in this regional approach.

\* Community input to regional meetings should be initiated in advance, using communication media such as local radio or SMS, identified or selected with the help of the RALOs.

## **4) Participation in the ICANN meetings**

The At-Large community has expressed strong disappointment towards the overall organization and management of the Cairo meeting. Lack of proper acknowledgment and recognition of the community's feedback, concerns, and issues has been aired through all RALOs. Poor remote participation opportunity, mistakes in the agenda, unmonitored chat sessions, last minute dissemination of working documents were just part of the concerns.

We refer the several recommendations from ALAC to the ICANN Board in its communication of 11 December 2008. (<http://www.atlarge.icann.org/correspondence/correspondence-11dec08-en.htm>).

The creation of a committee charged with the organization of meetings was recommended. We note with pleasure the formation of the Board Committee of Public Participation. The At-Large organization commits to work closely with the Board committee to improve public participation.

We believe that an assessment on the effectiveness of the measures instituted to improve participation would be required periodically.

### **Recommendations:**

\* Providing reliable working remote participation systems is vital. Telephonic participation, chat interface, and video streaming should be run to a far more professional standard than they currently are. ICANN should approach the entire idea of participation in a far more significant and serious way than has been done in the past, as this is the only possible way for participation for vision and hearing-impaired users.

\* ICANN should consider providing opportunities for the regional communities to work together on specific issues face-to-face and with regional groups on horizontal level, which can then feed back into the process on international level. This model has the potential to improve the policy development process by voicing regional differences in views in a more comprehensive way. This model would also allow more regular face-to-face meetings than would be possible with international meetings alone.

## **II. GLOBAL OUTREACH**

By Global Outreach, we mean more participation and engagement of the worldwide Internet-using community, regardless of their geographical location, their language, and their economic, cultural and social backgrounds. ICANN needs end users' participation to influence, provide orientation for the making of the decisions within ICANN and to give feedback about its policy development, implementation and impact.

There is:

- Uneven participation and engagement of the community in ICANN-related issues.
- Lack of a differentiated approach to involve a diverse community in the management and the implementation of ICANN activities.
- Lack of mechanisms to connect ICANN with the end users (ICANN is very far from the users at the local level to benefit from their participation)

These result in misrepresentation of the interests of the global stakeholders' community.

We acknowledge efforts by ICANN to remedy these problems. For example, in his report on January 29, 2008, Paul Twomey, President and CEO of ICANN, explained the "Nonbinding partnering relationships with private IGOs to aid in outreach to governments and local Internet communities' with organizations in all the continents".

[https://delhi.icann.org/files/Presidents\\_Rpt\\_29Jan08\(v2\).pdf](https://delhi.icann.org/files/Presidents_Rpt_29Jan08(v2).pdf)

There is a continued support for participation by our community from ICANN (travel support, Summit, provision of translation, remote participation systems), but there is still a lot to be done for better participation and engagement from the user community.

### **Recommendations:**

- ALAC must be given the opportunity to comment on issues early in supporting organization policy development processes in order to reflect the diversity concerning end users.
- ALAC and the Fellowship committee should work more closely in order to enhance the outcomes from both outreach efforts.
- Support the ALSes to provide feedback from local users on ICANN's activities (Information, sensitization, training seminars on ICANN related issues with radio, TV, etc.)

### **III. TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION**

The issue of language accessibility has been a long-standing issue for ICANN documents and working processes. Providing translations of working documents has been identified as a matter of central importance. Lack of translation of strategic documents, consultations and policy development processes is questioning ICANN's credibility and transparency.

Multilingual transcriptions and translations of ICANN's documents are crucial for the international community. Since ICANN is dealing with issues of significant importance for the whole information society, it is necessary to allow wider and equal access to strategic discussions and decisions, which are taken in the name of and are affecting the overall Internet community.

### **Recommendations:**

- ICANN should continue to work closely and use the multilingualism best practices of other international organizations, such as the UN.
- We believe that optimization of translations is desirable. We therefore suggest that a mechanism allowing the ALSes to be actively involved in the process of translation of documents that are important to be displayed in other languages (the UN official languages) be collaboratively developed. ALSes with their capacities and skills in ICANN matters could be considered as a possible translating resource, and to have the opportunity to step into the translation cycle with all the responsibilities of a third party translator. RALOs could help in identifying the documents which need to be translated and process this information to ICANN.

### **IV. TRAVEL SUPPORT**

Travel support is a mechanism to facilitate participation of geographically dispersed communities in order to secure their due influence into the decision making processes of the organization. Due to the all volunteer-based structure of the At-Large, travel support is essential to full participation and collaborative work.

The administrative handling of travel support has improved over the past years, but there are still issues that require attention and further improvement.

The per diem payment arrangements process needs to take into account that in some countries, receiving international wire transfers is impractical or impossible. In many cases it is difficult for some participants to cover their expenses on their accounts before the per diem or reimbursement is received.

The process of obtaining a visa for the host country as well as transit visas is often complex, expensive and time-consuming. Official invitation letters are typically needed, and depending on the country, air travel tickets may be required prior to starting the visa process.

Choice of the locations for the international ICANN meetings sometimes is made in way which is excluding some of the stakeholders simply because of the high price of accommodation.

### **Recommendations:**

- Since few or no At-Large participants have jobs even remotely related to ICANN issues, full travel support to ICANN meetings will be required. Without it, the ALAC will not be able to fulfil its regionally-oriented mandate to involve users in ICANN. ICANN should continue to fully fund ALAC travel costs as well as that of its Bylaw-mandated liaisons and key RALO leaders.
- ICANN should start the travel process sufficiently early to allow all participants to obtain their visas. In cases where the costs of travel to obtain visas, or the visa costs themselves are significantly in excess of those costs used in the per diem estimates, such costs should be reimbursed. Where possible, the local host should facilitate the process of obtaining visas for their country.
- Meeting planners should ensure that locations for international meetings are chosen with affordability as one criterion. More timely decision on ticketing and other travel arrangements would help to reduce cost.
- ICANN shall establish a process to delivering per diem remuneration taking into account the different money transfer rules in the several countries in order to assure members will have timely access to per diem funds. Mechanisms to handle per diem in cash should also be considered and developed.
- ICANN should avoid accommodating volunteer ALAC members and representatives from ALSes in low-quality hotels that are very remote from the main venue.
- For regional meetings, all members of Bylaw-recognized bodies from that region should receive travel and expense support on the same basis and to the same extent as at International Meetings.
- Amending the Rules and Procedures for Travel Support to comply with the proposals from the At-Large Advisory Committee Statement to the ICANN Board on the Public Consultation Related to Development of a Travel Policy, May 5, 2008 AL.ALAC/BUD.SC/0308/1/1

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(List to be continued)\_