



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

NAIROBI AFRINIC MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION

The General Manager (GM) attended the AfriNIC meetings in Nairobi between 13 and 18 May 2006. Although termed “AfriNIC meetings”, the meetings were effectively organized by various related bodies. The other bodies were the African Network Operators Group (AFNOG) and INET. On 13 and 14 May IPv6 and LIR trainings took place. These were followed by the AFNOG meeting on the 15th and AfriNIC policy meetings on the 16th and 17th. On the 18th, the INET meeting took place. Alan Levin joined the GM in Nairobi on 15 May.

The meetings afforded the GM the opportunity to meet a number of role-players within the domain name sector in Africa and abroad. Palesa Banda (DOC) and Alan Levin played an important role in introducing the GM to key people. These included AfriNIC and some ICANN board members, and the AfriNIC CEO (Mr. Adiel Akplogan). There was also an opportunity to share ideas with various ccTLDs (country code top level domains) administrators.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The IPv6 and LIR trainings gave insight into a number of IP administration issues, including:

- The administration of Internet registries;
- The difference between IPv6 and its predecessor, IPv4;
- Creating, modifying and deleting objects in AfriNIC's who-is database;

- Assigning IP addresses;
- Querying address ranges; and
- Reverse delegation.

AfriNIC is currently conducting technical training in different countries in Africa, and this is done upon invitation. Training on IPv6 and LIR is scheduled to take place in Johannesburg in September 2006. We may need to consider organizing similar training in the future, particularly for emerging, youth and women Internet service providers, as part of promoting competition within the .za domain name system.

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY

AfriNIC's public policy meetings (16-17 May) focused on policy discussions. There was also an opportunity to observe detailed discussions on the Provider Independent IPv6 Address Assignments to End-Users. After almost 2 hours of intense discussions, the meeting agreed to have the issue returned to AfriNIC's member mailing lists for further discussions. It was clear that more lobbying was needed before consensus could be reached on the matter. The meeting was primarily divided between those who did not see the issue as important in the short-term, and those who wanted the issue needed to be finalized without delay.

Another discussion centered on the 4-byte ASN numbering process, and consensus was reached on the issue. The GM did not participate in any of the voting processes, as he was under no mandate from .za DNA to participate in the voting processes. Furthermore, he would have qualified to vote as the voting was limited to AfriNIC members.

It seems that the .za DNA Board should be briefed about what forthcoming AfriNIC and ICANN meetings will focus on, and what the view of .za DNA representatives should be at each meeting. This will ensure that we are not left out when important decisions are taken.

African Top-Level Domains (AFTLD)

During the meetings, the GM was asked to attend an informal meeting of ccTLD administrators. The meeting was intended to discuss ways of reviving AFTLD as an

organization, and there was an agreement to have another informal meeting in Marrakech on 24 June 2006.

It should be noted that there were no undertakings made at this informal meeting, as there were questions around the need for the organization and how it related to AfriNIC. Those driving its establishment were tasked to prepare business plans and clearly document the logic of AFTLD for discussion in Marrakech.

From the informal discussions with African ccTLDs, it is clear that there is an expectation on South Africa to play a leading role in showing the rest of the continent how ccTLD policy and business model should be. This is not supposed to put pressure on .za DNA to finalize its policy development process, but once this is done, we can expect queries from African ccTLDs regarding our business model.

INET CONFERENCE

The INET Africa Regional Conference took place on 18 May. It focused on research and education on Internet in Africa, and on the need for the Internet to be internationalized and multilingual to suite local content needs. The conference was intended to discuss some of the agreements of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), and how these should be promoted going into the launch of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in late September 2006.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

The Nairobi meetings were a success in that most of the objectives set out in the beginning were achieved, save for the IPv6 discussion where consensus could not be reached. AfriNIC's CEO presented an annual report that proved that AfriNIC was growing positively as an organization, in spite of many challenges still faced in mobilizing various African countries to be part of the domain name system in Africa.

Gender representation was also a notable issue in the meetings. There were very few female representatives and those who attended were not as vocal. This is a complex issue that will take each country to address. It did not seem that South Africa had any female representation at the meetings, and this challenges us to work specifically on promoting women participation in the domain name sector.

Finally, my uninformed observation is that the Internet sector generally has many organizations with overlapping focus, and that a number of people wear many hats. This state of affairs may not be sustainable in an environment where Africa will be required to have a united voice on its issues. This is particularly important in the case of the forthcoming IGF launch. While we cannot influence what happens in other African states, we may consider convincing DOC to start engaging various sectors in South Africa as part of the IGF process.

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