



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

ICANN SAO PAULO MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION

The Sao Paulo meeting was an interesting event with much discussion in various ICANN structures. As a place, Sao Paulo is (said to be) a city of more than 20 million inhabitants and is truly the commercial hub of Brazil. Brazilian people are quite warm and they took to non-Portuguese people quite kindly, particularly wanting to know more about South Africa as a country.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

There were a number of technical discussions discussed from IANA issues to IDN and DNSSec.

1. IANA update

Presentation on the operations of IANA was made by Kim Davies to various ICANN structures including ccNSO. Kim's ccNSO presentation was an update about the e-IANA project and the recently posted policy discussion papers. It also touched issues relating to the renewal of the IANA contract.

2. IDN

The main development regarding the ongoing work of Internationalized Domain Names (IDN) was the arising character issues which carry different meanings in different languages. This was noted during the panel presentation which included Kim Davies (IANA), Demi Getchko (.br) and Tina Dam of ICANN. The character issue somewhat posed some challenge but the IDN working group was finding a balance and running various tests.

At the end there was a common feeling that the ccNSO and GAC should work closely with the IDN Working Group and facilitate IDN implementation by relevant ccTLDs. This view was also shared by the ICANN Board.

Overall, although the IDN project is an interesting development for the affected regions, it does not look like an important project for SA in the short to medium term.

3. DNSSec

Steve Crocker and his team made presentations to the ccNSO and other ICANN structures regarding new developments in DNSSec and answered various implementation questions from ccTLDs.

4. ccNSO Technical Working Group

Eberhardt Lisse (.na) made a presentation outlining the group's involvement in planning the ICANN Sao Paulo meeting.

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

1. Accountability & transparency

Paul Levins of ICANN made presentations regarding measures to improve ICANN's accountability and transparency. ICANN members were invited to participate in the ongoing consultation process. The ccNSO was also made aware of the recent formal relationships between ICANN and other ccTLDs. Again, it is becoming important for .za DNA to consider entering into a formal relationship with ICANN through an exchange of letters.

Attention: Board

2. ICANN strategic plan

The strategic plan for the next few years was tabled in various ICANN structures and to the ccNSO. The general feeling was that the plan correctly captured ICANN's strategic mission for the next few years.

3. ccNSO

Vint Cerf (ICANN Chair), Paul Twomey (ICANN President & CEO) and the ICANN Board discussed setting up an institutional structure for the ccNSO. It was clear that the Board was willing to put in resources, but the ccNSO would need to agree on some institutional and accountability issues, including ccTLD contributions. However, no final decision was taken.

I was made aware that a number of ccTLDs were making various contributions to the ccNSO, and .za was (informally) encouraged to consider making a contribution.

Attention: Board

Once again, ccNSO meetings are proving to be very interesting as ccTLDs get an opportunity to debate various issues affecting their operations. Such issues as the ICANN Accountability Framework and Whois are some of the discussions where interesting views were shared.

I had interesting informal discussions with various ccTLD representatives including .nl, .fr, .no, .uk, .br, and .au. These concentrated on various policy issues which .za DNA is currently dealing with and the lessons learnt by these ccTLDs in doing their work.

4. Regional demarcation

Dave Archibold made a presentation to the ccNSO about the past and present ICANN regions, and issues which currently required its attention. Of particular was still the issue of APTLD wanting to split into 2 regions (this issue was also a thorn at ICANN Marrakesh). Interesting news was the possibility of further regional splits in Europe with Scandinavia considering forming a separate region from the rest of Europe.

Again the issue of Arab Africa moving to the Arab League was mentioned (the first time it at ICANN Marrakesh – June 2006). This issue is substantially premised from a language point of view (i.e. IDN), which is wrong, and is strangely advocated by non-Africans. In particular, an allegation is made from time to time to Egypt & Morocco to move away from Africa to join the Arab League because of IDN developments. This sad allegation has been vehemently denied by both Egypt and Morocco.

After some discussions, no concrete decision was taken on whether or not this issue should be tabled to the ICANN Board. Instead a voluntary task team will be formed to come up with a proposal before ICANN Lisboa 2007. Paulos Nyirenda will represent Africa in the team.

5. ccTLD best practices

Presentations were made by .br, .uk & .mx. The .br & .uk registries are fairly advanced & their focus is more on improving operational & technical processes. Nominet (.uk registry operator) now has at least 4.5 million domain names registered & is getting stronger in its marketing & customer service campaigns. The .mx ccTLD is still at an early commercial phase, focusing on education, awareness & marketing to increase uptake of domain name registrations.

6. Regional ccTLD cooperation

An interesting informal lunch-time meeting (facilitated by Chris Disspain - .au CEO) took place on 6 December between APTLD, AFTLD, CENTR and LACTLD regarding possible ways of closer co-operation. The organizations all agreed to communicate more actively and help each other in mobilizing and strengthening ccTLDs in their regions and smoothing ccNSO's policy development processes.

7. Internet Governance Forum

A presentation was made to the ccNSO about the outcomes of the Inaugural IGF meeting in Athens in October 2006. The main message was that the IGF had had various presentations about a number internet policy issues and that no concrete resolutions were taken, although the discussions has been very useful.

8. Other ICANN structures

Several other meetings took place within structures such as the Government Advisory Council (GAC), Generic Name Supporting Organization (GNSO), At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) and other organizations. There was not enough time to attend most of these meetings as they overlapped and ran parallel to ccNSO meetings. GAC meetings ran long as usual and at the end the general comment from attendants was

that although much had been discussed, no concrete resolutions were taken on some of the major policy discussions.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

Although much activity took place, the ICANN Sao Paulo meeting lacked the energy and commitment which was evident at ICANN Marrakesh. This was partly because a number of ongoing processes could not be finalized. The format of the meetings was also quite squashed with many meetings running parallel to each other, which substantially prevented participation.

The primary division between pro-ICANN delegates and anti-ICANN delegates was somewhat still evident, and so was the tendency to create many new sub-structures (mainly by the pro-ICANNs).

As a global policy development platform, ICANN is very important particularly in the light of it still reporting to the US government and of the IGF proving to be a less influential platform so far. Its service to the international community has always been of great importance, and it is important that any change in Internet governance landscape should be primarily to transform ICANN from the inside. The ideal end of the transformation should be to have an ICANN truly independent from the US government control.

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