



# ICANN PARIS 2008 MEETING

## INTRODUCTION

The 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting of ICANN took place at the Meridien Le Montparnasse hotel in Paris (France) from 22 to 26 June 2008. The .za DNA General Manager, Vika Mpisane, attended the meeting with Ms. Nirvani Dhevcharran, a .za DNA Board member, as part of her orientation.

The meeting was a huge success as ICANN delegates adapted to the new leadership of ICANN, with the new ICANN Chairman, Peter Dengate-Thrush, at the helm having succeeded Dr. Vint Cerf, the internationally acclaimed Internet Evangelist in October 2007.

Other than the beauty of Paris, the ICANN Paris will be remembered more for its notable decision to add new generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs) to the DNS root. More on this is covered in the specific topic below.

## 1. ORGANISATION

The meeting was hosted by both ICANN and Agifem, a non-profit organization made up of several French Internet companies and organizations. The opening address was given by Mr. Eric Besson, France's Minister of State for forward planning, assessment of public policies, and development of the digital economy.

ICANN estimated that 1,672 people participated from 166 different countries, making this ICANN's biggest ever meeting. This is a clear sign of ICANN's growing global credibility, in spite of the genuine concerns remaining about its being overseen unilaterally by the US government.

## 2. KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### 2.1 New gTLDs

Discussions over the possibility of adding new gTLDs to the DNS, as part of providing more access and competition, had been going on in various ICANN discussion lists and ICANN structures since 2007. The push for new gTLDs was obviously pushed strongly by the generic Names Supporting Organisation (gNSO) of ICANN, but key supporting organisations such as the ccNSO, GAC and ALAC all had an opportunity to provide inputs in the discussions.

The ICANN Paris meeting became famous for the decision reached by the ICANN Board to endorse the addition of new gTLDs. The Board approved the policy recommendations on new gTLDs developed by the GNSO, ICANN's policy development arm for the generic name space. The Board directed ICANN staff to further develop and complete a detailed implementation plan.

This is an important milestone and it means more work for ICANN and its delegates, as we need to thrash out a detailed and fair process of how the process of adding new gTLDs should be managed.

The new gTLDs obviously pose a threat of added competition to ccTLDs, particularly those in the developing parts of the world. However, my personal opinion is that a ccTLD like .za should not necessarily worry about this development, but should look at improving its service offering so that it can out-compete the competition.

More information on new gTLDs can be accessed at <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtld-program.htm>.

## **2.2 IDN progress report**

With the testing of IDN TLDs having gone well in early 2008, the IDNC working group had put focus on accelerating the introduction of IDNs (the "fast track") where specific, non-controversial country-code top-level domains in non-Latin scripts could be approved and added to the Internet's root without having to wait for the full approval process to be finalized.

The WG had posted its draft final report on the feasibility of the fast-track process for public comment few weeks prior to the Paris meeting. The report provided a number of high-level recommendations and received broad approval from the ccNSO and the GAC.

The support received was evident in the feedback provided during ccNSO, GAC and ALAC sessions in Paris. The feedback was given in response to the updates given by the ICANN Director of the IDN Program, Ms. Tina Dam. She described progress made on technical and other IDN implementation issues. IDNs were discussed at the Public Forum, and a progress update was also given on the final day of the meeting.

Of particular interest was how finalization of the IDNA protocol revision would impact top-level IDN domains, in particular when and how they will be introduced. Going forward the ICANN staff will now have to provide the ICANN community with a detailed implementation plan that will certainly gather a lot of interest at the ICANN Cairo meeting later in 2008.

More information on this is available at <http://icann.org/topics/idn>.

## **2.3 ICANN Meetings Review**

Subsequent to the discussion that started in the ccNSO during ICANN New Delhi 2008, ICANN staff presented a paper recommending that the number of ICANN meetings be

reduced from 3 to 2 per year. This sparked interesting discussions as some delegates felt that ICANN had matured and no longer to meet 3 times a year, while others felt the 3 meetings kept the community on its toes and forced to work faster with more commitment, knowing that they only had 3 to months before the next meeting.

There was more concern on the recommendation that due to huge logistical challenges in preparing for each ICANN meetings, there should a central meeting venue for at least one ICANN meeting per year. While this may have some advantages, my concern is obviously the identity and location of such central venue.

If the move is to select another location in the West, then we should simply forget about the idea. Yet if ICANN wants to take this opportunity to select the central location in a region where Internet growth is still lagging behind, such as Africa, which I consider to be fairly central as well, then the idea may be good.

This idea will be discussed further leading to ICANN Cairo, but I really do not think it will bear any fruits as it may be marred with controversy just like the infamous ICANN Regions issue.

More information is available at [http://www.icann.org/public\\_comment/#meeting-consultation-2008](http://www.icann.org/public_comment/#meeting-consultation-2008).

## **2.4 IPv6**

IPv6 continues to attract the attention of ICANN delegates and various constituencies because of the imminence of the exhaustion of the IPv4 address space. ICANN, as the manager of Internet's unique identifiers and IP address, is pushing strongly for the adoption of IPv6, which is a technology that will provide vast expansion in the number of IP address.

IPv6 information sessions were held in Paris to create IPv6 awareness and encourage a coordinated adoption of IPv6 globally. ICANN's supporting organisations and advisory committees had IPv6 addresses by experts.

ICANN has produced a simple IPv6 factsheet which can be accessed at <http://www.icann.org/announcements/factsheet-ipv6-26oct07.pdf>

## **3. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS**

Other particular discussions took place about the following:

- (a) Improving ICANN institutional confidence: the ICANN President's Strategy Committee tabled 3 papers aimed at improving ICANN's accountability in the light of the pending expiry of ICANN's Joint Partnership Agreement (JPA) with the US Department of Commerce in September 2009.
- (b) Registrar agreement improvements – ICANN outlined amendments to its registrar agreements, pointing out that the amendments were meant to protect registrants.

- (c) Business access – for the first ICANN held a series of targeted meetings with business leaders with an aim of encouraging business' participation in ICANN processes.

## **OVERALL IMPRESSION**

The ICANN Board's decision to add new gTLDs to the DNS will remain the most important highlight of the ICANN Paris meeting for the foreseeable future. Much more work lies ahead in managing the process now. ICANN as a global organisation continues to gain momentum and recognition, but my hope is that all the parties should find ways of ensuring that ICANN eventually becomes a global organisation independent of the US government oversight in 2009.

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