



ICANN CAIRO 2008 MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The 33rd ICANN meeting was held at the Cairo Intercontinental City Stars from 2 to 7 November 2008. It was opened by Dr. Tarek Mohamed Kamel, Egypt's Minister of Communications and Information Technology. There were 1,702 attendees from 144 different countries, which surpassed the record number of delegates in ICANN Paris in June 2008.

The meeting was hosted by ICANN and the Egyptian government, and its overall organisation was as impressive as any other well-organised ICANN meeting. The .za DNA GM attended this meeting with Mr. Nhlanhla Mabaso, a .za DNA Board member.

1. INTERNET SECURITY CAPACITY BUILDING

It was notable that this round of ICANN Africa meeting was preceded by an all-important training for ccTLDs in "Attack and Contingency Response Planning" in Cairo. This was an important milestone particularly for Africa as the event was primarily organised by African Top Level Domains (AfTLD) in collaboration with other regional ccTLD organisations: APTLD, LACTLD and CENTR.

2. KEY DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 New gTLDs

Leading to the meeting and following the ground-breaking decision of the ICANN Board in ICANN Paris 208, ICANN staff published a draft new gTLD Applicant Guidebook for those wishing to apply for a new generic top-level domain. A number of meetings and workshops were dedicated to explaining the guidebook and receiving input and feedback from the community on its contents.

It became apparent from the discussions that more work still needed to be done before new gTLD applications could be accepted. There were concerns mainly from the ccNSO and GAC about the protection of geographic names, while the intellectual property organisations had serious reservations about the lack of clarity regarding the protection of trademarks and intellectual property.

There were also concerns about the cost issues, as ICANN made it clear it needed to recover its costs in accepting and evaluating new gTLDs. My overall view is that ICANN

still needs to study in more detail the introduction of new gTLDs. There are issues of protection of geographic names, pricing, competition and protection of intellectual that need to be clarified before new gTLD applications could be accepted.

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

2.2 IDN progress report

Few weeks before the Cairo meeting, the draft implementation plan for the IDN Fast Track was published. The Fast Track would allow a limited number of IDN ccTLDs to be introduced before the formal policy development process is finalized. The current focus of the IDN fast-track is on country code, as opposed to generic, internationalized domain names at the top level of the Internet. This work continues to gain more credibility and momentum as it receives more support across various platforms.

Yet the issue will be when it comes to IDN gTLDs, as clear policy will have to be developed there. The IDN ccTLDs also still needs to clarify other potentially thorny issues such as the protection of ccTLDs from being registered as IDN ccTLDs. Then there is also an issue of trademark protection in a scenario where a well-known brand or trademark is registered, say, in Arabic by a squatter.

Other outstanding issues include the relationship between an IDN ccTLD operator and ICANN, both in the type of agreement or framework entered into and the provision of funds; the issue of contention between existing top-level domains and ones applied for through the new gTLD process; and a few technical requirements.

It is expected the these issues will be addressed at the ICANN Mexico City meeting in March 2009. More information on this is available at <http://icann.org/topics/idn>.

2.3 DNSSEc and the Kaminsky Vulnerability

The vulnerability of the DNS identified by Dan Kaminsky, a security researcher, raised alarms in the DNS space, and ICANN moved quick to address the issue. At ICANN Cairo, a number of security briefings on this issue and other related issues were given to ICANN's various supporting organizations and advisory committees.

Presentations also focused on how the DNSSEC protocol would be of important use in closing down the Kaminsky vulnerability. This was an important development that at least calmed down the nerves that may have emerged as a result of the Kaminsky Report.

2.4 Improving Institutional Confidence (IIC)

Following the initial discussions at ICANN Paris, this issue was a subject of two public comment periods and a global outreach campaign. The IIC consultation is based on successive drafts of a set of three documents (Improving Institutional Confidence in ICANN, Transition Action Plan, and Frequently Asked Questions).

The Cairo meeting discussed the revised versions based on community inputs from ICANN and a series of public meetings in Dakar, New Zealand, US and Switzerland in late 2008.

It is hope going forward that the end result of this process will be a new ICANN accountability framework post the JPA-era. ICANN staff will now table an implementation plan for consideration at the ICANN Mexico meeting.

3. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Other particular discussions took place about the following:

- (a) Independent reviews of the ICANN Board and the ICANN supporting organisations as required by the ICANN bylaws.
- (b) Business access meetings between ICANN and business leaders with an aim of encouraging business' participation in ICANN processes.
- (c) An address by the ITU Secretary General, Dr, Hamadoun Toure.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

The ICANN Cairo meeting managed to continue well from the ICANN Paris on both the new gTLD and IDN ccTLD fast-track programs. As anticipated after ICANN Paris the ICANN meetings review issue no longer featured prominently as it became clear that it had a potential for unnecessary controversy. The next ICANN meeting in Mexico City should continue to be dominated by the new gTLD and IDN ccTLD issues.

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