ICANN73 | Virtual Community Forum - Joint Session: ICANN Board and RSSAC
Monday, March 7, 2022 - 16:30 to 17:30 AST

WENDY PROFIT: As we are at the half hour, half past the hour now, so unless we're waiting for anyone else to join, the main speakers are present. I can now hand it over to my colleague Aaron Jimenez who read the opening welcome remarks and housekeeping items.

Recording in progress.

AARON JIMENEZ: Hello, my name is Aaron Jimenez. Welcome to the joint session with the ICANN Board and the Root Server System Advisory Committee.

Please note that this session is being recorded and follows the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior.

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For our panelists, please state your name for the record and the language you will speak. If speaking a language other than English, before speaking ensure you have selected the language you will speak from the interpretation menu.

Also be sure to mute all audible notifications and speak clearly and slowly for our interpreters. This discussion is between the ICANN Board and the RSSAC; therefore, we will not be taking questions from the audience. However, all participants may make comments in the chat. Please use the drop-down menu in the chat pod and select "Respond to all panelists and attendees." This will allow everyone to view your comment.

To view the real-time transcription, click on the "Closed Caption" button in the Zoom toolbar.

With that, I will hand it over ICANN Board Chair, Maarten Botterman.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Thank you, Aaron. Thank you, Board Ops. And welcome to RSSAC, people here on the call. Really a pleasure and looking forward to this interaction with the RSSAC.

I've been following with high interest for some years already to see how well RSSAC is finding independent -- root server operators are finding each other and finding a way forward to addressing the increased challenges for this one global Internet from their perspective and making things happen together to address that, today's and tomorrow's challenges.

A lot of work has been done, and I'm deeply impressed, and I'm very happy to see some colleagues on this call who are deeply involved with that work as well.

And for this session, I'd like to ask Kaveh to take the floor and lead the session.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you. Thank you very much, Maarten. And hello, everyone. Let me start with saying that I really miss seeing you in person. So it's been too long. But, hey, we are here virtual, and let's have yet another one of RSSAC and Board sessions, which actually have been proven to be very good interaction to make sure we are aligned and have good understanding of where we are on the matters that RSSAC has voiced to the Board.

So with that, let's go to the first slide, this next slide, please.

This is basically the topic from RSSAC. A very quick intro. So of course we have -- we have Fred and Ken as our chair and vice-chair. And from the Board side, I'm RSSAC liaison to the Board, and we have Tripti and Akinori as Board liaisons to GWG, which is the Root Server System Governance Working Group.

Just as a reminder, we also, in the Board, we have basically a GWG caucus, which is -- which consists of all BTC members, Board Technical Committee members. So generally whenever advice from RSSAC comes in or there is an interaction with the Governance Working Group, the BGC, in form of RSS GWG caucus, discusses the matter. Goes through and tries to form a common understanding and recommendation for the BTC and full board, which then gets presented to the full board and discussed.

A bit of background info. So with that I will first pass on the floor to Fred as the RSSAC chair if he has any comments.

Fred?

FRED BAKER: Hello. Thank you much for your introduction. What's the -- what's the RSSAC concerned about? Well, right now we are in the middle of the conversion to the -- or the evolution of the Root Server System in ICANN and coordinating with the GWG on that. And so

we're very interested in what they do and in the Board's interactions with them.

Now, for the record, and I'm not sure how -- how much everyone understands this, the Root Server System Advisory Committee is composed of employees of the root server operators, but it is not necessarily the people that operate the network for the root server operators. And as such, when a question comes to us that is for the RSOs, for the root server operators, then we go and talk with another set of people which -- part of which is us and part of which is some additional people from the root server operators. And so that may not -- not be clear to people that are not directly involved, but it's true.

What we have been doing lately, as much as anything, is being in a communication role between ICANN, between the ICANN Board and the root server operators, and then putting out some statements that are intended to be helpful during the evolution process, part of which is that the GWG has a model which -- for the evolved RSS which differs in important aspects from our -- what we suggested in RSSAC37. And so we looked at our model and we looked at their model and asked ourselves how would one choose between these two. And so that has been recently published as a -- as an RSSAC numbered document.

I'm not sure I have a lot to add at this point, but, Ken, do you have anything to add? Any -- Let me introduce, Ken Renard is my vice-chair. So, Ken, do you have anything to add to that?

KEN RENARD: Thanks, Fred. This is Ken Renard.

So the two documents that Fred's referring to, one of them is success criteria. So that's a way to measure models that are -- of governance that are developed against some important criteria, some of which are outlined in RSSAC37, some of which we've kind of learned along the way. We're preparing for that. And want it thank the Board for approving the new membership layout of the -- of the GWG. We are working with the GWG chair now to come up with a list of RSO representatives that will be added to the GWG. We're almost there, and we expect to join and hopefully hit the ground running and do good work in the GWG real soon.

Thanks.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you very much, Ken.

If I may, I would like to also ask Tripti if there is any comments or updates from basically Board's delegation to the GWG. Tripti?

TRIPTI SINHA: Sure, sure. So thank you very much, Kaveh. And Fred and Ken, thank you for your comments.

Indeed, when the GWG was put together and began to do its work, about a year and a half into the work there was, as you recall, this checkpoint where we wanted to make sure -- the GWG chair wanted to make sure that the work should be reviewed by the RSOs, and the RSOs then went on and did 58 which is essentially -- very good work, by the way. It further elucidates and defines the principles that were built into 37 and 38 and put together the success criteria which then was fully embraced by the GWG and approved by the Board.

So now this work will continue in the spirit that it was intended to be built on, which is to build this governance model on the principles of transparency and accountability under the ICANN framework.

So it is, indeed, once the RSO nominations come in and are part of the GWG, this work will continue. So the Board is fully supportive of this, and we will have complete representation from all the operators, as it should be. And we look forward to fully supporting this. And you have the entire Board behind this work.

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VIRTUAL COMMUNITY FORUM

Back to you, Kaveh.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you very much.

So I don't know if there's any specific question or part of the discussion that RSSAC or the Board wants to focus on. Otherwise, we can go through an overall view of where we are with GWG and what are our expectations. So Fred, Ken, or actually any one of RSSAC members, do you have any specific thing on the current process with GWG you would like to bring up?

FRED BAKER: Well, so no. The RSSAC doesn't have anything specific to bring to the Board at this point. We reserve the right to do so in the future. But right now, no.

I believe the Board had a couple of questions, though. And be happy to discuss those.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Yes. So that would be -- that would be second part -- oops. Sorry for that. I just want to make sure that, for the first part, if there is anything else remaining from the Board side. Is there any specific thing?

So maybe it helps if I do a quick recap for everyone, because we also have members -- I see we have observers who might not have followed exactly the process.

So a quick update, the latest interaction with GWG and the Board basically was after -- after some alignment with root server operators. There were basically two requests from GWG, two main ones, which were sent as a mail from Ted Hardie, chair of GWG, to the ICANN Board asking basically asking for a change in representation and also if there was a need for any change in how they make decisions.

The decision-making part, Board basically reaffirmed that it is -- it seems that they are running it and it is fine, and they can basically use the current mechanism to make any changes if they want. And then that also included asking for more time for the process from the Board, which the Board also approved.

And the other part was asking to change our representation. And the background for that is basically root server operators -- sorry, I got a message to speak a bit slower.

So the root server operators, as per agreement, so it was not a surprise or something that we have thought beforehand, but we had three representatives in the Governance Working Group. But

when it came to actually approving and voting on the models and all of that, one of our values, as root server operators, actually, and one of the most important ones, is that we are independent.

So of course operationally we know that we are responsible to make sure that the Root Server System as a whole works, but the power of that is having these 12 independent organizations making autonomous decisions for 14, basically, root server designators that we run. And based on that, we really didn't find any way to represent us through one or three members in GWG. We wanted to make sure that that independence actually still stays until we have -- we come up with a full agreement for the evolutions, for the evolved system to basically have a clean handover.

So that change was approved by the Board. And as it was mentioned, the process is ongoing to have -- to basically have a representative from each root server operator in GWG. And hopefully the work will continue with that.

And then the timeline is we now -- now will work with GWG, and as root server operators we try to document more work, work on draft proposals, straw men drafts for what we are going to propose and bring up in GWG. And hopefully we can actually move this forward in the next few months.

I don't know if there is anyone who has any comments either from the Board or RSSAC who wants to add it to these brief recs I provided or if there are any corrections?

Hearing none, let's focus on the questions from the ICANN Board. So, just a quick discussion. We have brought up these questions in our last RSSAC meeting. And basically we, as RSSAC, didn't have any specific comments we wanted to make as a group on this. But we thought it was good actually if we hear from the Board side what the Board specifically wants to know from RSSAC, and possibly members of RSSAC might have comments or at least clarifying questions to ask and interact with Board members.

And with that, Maarten, I wanted to ask you if there was any additional commentary that you or any of the Board members want to provide on these two questions from the Board.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: As a Board, we are very aware that there's a lot of work to do and we also are aware that over the past years, some of the work has been progressing and we have also been hampered by having a lot of developments over time to which implementation is imminent and needs to happen.

Knowing we can't do everything at the same time, one thing is still how do we prioritize that and how do we do that best involving the community.

The other one is also very much how does that help that we make sure that we do the most important things as expressed in the strategic plan. And basically, the strategic plan, as you know, is set up for us to be able to fulfill our mission.

So looking at where we are today and looking at what's at our table, what do you think is the key priority to tackle together with your community? I think with the work from the working group, I think that's one very key element. And we talked about that, and we look forward to seeing that move forward with the full support of the Board and the full understanding that this is an area we seek independent operators to work together. And we're very supportive of that and look forward to seeing that happen.

Next to that, what else do you think we should really take on to make sure that we continue to achieve our mission?

FRED BAKER: Well, thank you, Maarten.

I think the comment that I would make is that the RSSAC right now is mostly trying to make sure that the evolution happens and makes sense. So we're very attuned to what the RSOs think and talking with ICANN about them and talking with the GWG about them. Having the RSOs added to the GWG, I think, will be very helpful in that regard.

So a question that we have -- and it may be true, and we'll see. Can the GWG -- or will the GWG work spawn new issues for the RSSAC and the RSSAC caucus to work on? Or basically will everything get resolved within the GWG? And I don't know that, but I would expect that there will be issues spun out that the GWG doesn't feel that it's ready to directly attack.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Maybe, Tripti, I can ask you to comment on that one.

TRIPTI SINHA: Sure. So, Fred, you are basically asking for a prediction on what's to come. And it's impossible to predict the future, but I will say that 58 has provided tremendous guidance and essentially, it's a set of success criteria.

So there will be fidelity to that document to ensure that, you know, the model as it is built and evolved does meet those success criteria.

So I'm sure there's going to be some work here or there, but there will be checkpoints along the way. And as you know, one of the models that's being considered -- which was discussed when 37, 38 was being written -- was potentially an SO-type model, the current model that exists within ICANN, and looked to see how we can borrow from that to build something that works for the RSOs.

And so, you know, who's to say what's to happen in the future. But I think you have provided tremendous guidance, and it will align with that.

I hope that helps, Fred.

FRED BAKER: Yeah. So we have forwarded the documents that Carlos sent us to the RSOs. And we've scheduled the first of at least a couple of calls to discuss that and see where that goes.

That will be one of the things that we want to have on the table with the GWG, and the GWG may or may not agree to it. We would like to have that on the table.

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VIRTUAL COMMUNITY FORUM

TRIPTI SINHA: And all the RSOs will be in the GWG. So all voices will be at the table, and it will be consensus-driven. So I'm very confident that you -- that a model will be produced that will work for all.

FRED BAKER: Well, I'm confident of that as well. Not sure I have anything to add to that.

TRIPTI SINHA: Kaveh, back to you.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you very much. I don't see any raised hands or anyone trying to want to add to the first question.

So maybe -- oh, Brad, please.

BRAD VERD: Yeah, just really quick. I think, Maarten, going to your question, I think it's an important question and I think kind of touches on the first question with us talking about the GWG.

I think it's important to remember or to realize that I think what we've come out with so far with the GWG, which I know was a

greenfield effort for ICANN with stakeholders outside of this community -- this is a new thing for everybody -- I think we ended up in a really good place with 58, you know, and the success criteria going forward.

So I think there's a great story there that we ended in a good place going through the GWG. And I think going forward to your question about prioritization, I think, Kaveh -- I'm sorry, both Tripti and Fred touched on it, but we just need to be fluid as we figure this out because it is -- it is new to all of us as we move forward in defining what the governance system looks like for the root server system.

And there will be unknowns and challenges in front of us. I think we are set to tackle them. We just need to be aware that it's going to be to happen. Thanks.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: I very much appreciate that. It's so clear that, yes, a key value is the independence.

And it's not only a key value for yourselves as organizations but also for the essence of the Internet being robust, right? So that's well understood.

But in all that, what we share if, there's one thing, keep the thing going. And it's in that -- because it's so much a shared value, I really was impressed and appreciated the 58 and the effort that was made into making sure -- focusing on the essence, which is how do we make this work together.

So with that, it's clear that ICANN is really a multistakeholder system where multistakeholders come together to contribute as a part to make it possible to fulfill the mission.

And I'm really confident that, indeed, also here this part of the Internet will be well taken care of. So, hence, as Tripti said, as Kaveh said, as Fred confirmed, I think we're on the right track and full support and trust from the Board to get there.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you. Thank you very much, Maarten. And I think maybe this is good to add, there is also an important message in what Brad said, which I also hear constantly now, especially after 58, our success criteria document, that at least almost everyone that I have interacted with, or I have discussed the path we are in, now I hear everybody is confident. I mean, they know there are a lot of things that we don't know; but there is no black holes that people can go "I don't know what might happen."

So I think we all know there is a patch. At least the consensus that I read is almost everybody agrees there is a patch, and everybody knows it is possible to cross that road and follow that patch.

But, yes, we still need to explore because we don't know exactly how it looks.   But, to me, this is really important.   And since publication of 58, I think it has been a major milestone because I really read that with everyone I interact with, that we know it can be done. And we are confident it will be done, which I think is a very strong and important message, especially exploring, yeah, unknowns. So --

TRIPTI SINHA: And Kaveh, just to add one more comment, which is we're going to do this in a thoughtful manner and take our time and get it right. And there will be bumps and bruises along the way. That's just the nature of coming up with a model that's never been built before, keeping accountability, transparency, and sustainability, right? It's going to need to sustain itself into the future, so we've got to get this right.

But you got the full support of the community and of the Board. So I am very confident we'll get there.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you very much, trip me.

                                 And Akinori, please.

AKINORI MAEMURA: Thank you very much, Kaveh.

                                 As the liaison to the GWG from the ICANN Board, I have been observing this process. And for me, this GWG is for us to create a new governance model of the root server system. But actually I found that actually this process itself is some evaluation -- evolution of how the RSOs work with the community. And it didn't look always easy. And we had to rethink the process, and now we have the new working model over the consensus and including all RSOs.

                                 So this kind of experience to be strengthening the governance model of the root server system itself. So I really admire your effort, and I expect much -- more fruitful proceedings. Thank you very much for you all for your effort.

                                 Thanks.

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VIRTUAL COMMUNITY FORUM

KAVEH RANJBAR: Yes. Thank you very much, Akinori.

And Göran, please.

GÖRAN MARBY: No. I just want to thank you -- thanks to the group. I think that one thing -- and I said this before. One of the things that's been very positive in this process is we've been able to, I think, even -- even have a better cooperation between the root servers and execs at ICANN Org and our role as the root server operator as well. And I am really thankful for that. I think that will continue to help how we can do -- continue to do things together in the future.

So I just want to recognize that. We spoke about that in a couple of the calls we had. But I think that the trust that we established will be a good foundation going forward.

Not aside from the fact we will continue to argue, of course, but it's good to argue. Thank you.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you very much, Göran. And, of course, yes, we explored more discussion.

I don't see anyone else raising hands, which means I can actually go to the last part which is open mic.

Let me first ask any of the RSSAC members if there's any questions or comments that you might have.

Hearing none, anyone from the Board?

Okay.

And I see we have -- we have actually a good number of observers and other attendants. So generally, in a physical meeting as well, if there's time, we actually ask if there's any questions or comments that RSSAC or the Board -- Board can clarify regarding what is in RSSAC's mission or scope.

I don't see anyone raising hands or comments. So with that, let me start with Tripti. If there's any closing comments, Tripti or Akinori.

TRIPTI SINHA: Well, I just wanted to say that I think we're all looking forward to the next couple of years. It's going to be an exciting time. This is extremely important work, and it's long overdue. And I think we've got some challenges ahead, and I just wanted to let the

RSSAC and the RSOs know that you have the full support of org and Board, and let's go there and build a system, this model.

Thank you.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you very much, Tripti.

Fred? Ken? Any comments?

FRED BAKER: Well, I think the picture comes to mind, we brought it up in the IETF a couple of times of changing the engines on an airplane while it's in flight. And of course we're doing that with the RSS now. And so we're proceeding as carefully as we can, and at the same time trying to get things done and get things done in a reasonable manner. And I certainly expect that the outcome will be positive.

So thank you.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you very much.

And, sorry, Akinori. I just noticed that you were unmuting. So --

AKINORI MAEMURA: Don't worry. I was just saying that I have been pretty much done by the previous comment. But the very last. I see quite a number of observers here for our discussion between RSSAC and ICANN Board. And I do encourage all of you to participate in the -- participate in observing the GWG discussion itself and for you to -- if you had something, then you are -- we are quite happy to hear your opinion on the RSS governance for the future.

Thank you very much.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you very much.

And with that, back to you, Maarten. Any closing remark?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Yeah. No, thank you. Thank you, Kaveh, for being both such a good board member and participating and informing us about this work as well as being an independent root server operator yourself. It's really big thanks to all for making sure that this part of a crucial element of making the Internet work works. And gratitude goes out to you.

So with that, thank you all for your time and attention. And looking forward to see everything move forward towards a sustainable one Internet serving one world to go.

Thank you all.

KAVEH RANJBAR: Thank you, everyone.

TRIPTI SINHA: Thank you.

Have a good day. Cheers.

Thanks.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]