



DotConnectAfrica Trust

NETmundial: The Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance

Contribution by DotConnectAfrica trust to the NetMundial. Topic: Multistakeholder Model and Its effectiveness in the changing Scope and Oversight Roles of ICANN in Internet Governance and DNS Management. The Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance will focus on crafting Internet governance principles and proposing a roadmap for the further evolution of the Internet governance ecosystem. The meeting is scheduled for April 23rd and 24th 2014 in Sao Paulo, Brazil and will be live webcast enabling remote participation. The meeting follows an initiative proposed by CGI.br and /1net. #netmundial2014

Topic:

Multistakeholder Model and Its effectiveness in the changing Scope and Oversight Roles of ICANN in Internet Governance and DNS Management

Abstract

Traditionally, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) coordinates the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) functions, which are key technical services critical to the continued operations of the Domain Name System (DNS). The IANA functions include: (1) the coordination of the assignment of technical protocol parameters including the management of the address and routing parameter area (ARPA) top-level domain; (2) the administration of certain responsibilities associated with Internet DNS root zone management such as generic (gTLD) and country code (ccTLD) Top-Level Domains; (3) the allocation of Internet numbering resources; and (4) other services. ICANN performs the IANA functions under a U.S. Government contract.

ICANN has also evolved in its structures to use the 'Multistakeholder Model' in the dissemination of some of its functions and this has seen the creation of working groups and constituencies. ICANN's outputs go through a Policy Development Processes and rely mainly on a bottom up, consensus-driven mechanism.

Recently ICANN has been part of discussions to globalize ICANN's services in order to broaden ICANN's reach, this has further been strengthened by the U.S. Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announcement on its intent to transition key Internet domain name functions to the global multistakeholder community.

NTIA has also asked the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to convene global stakeholders to develop a proposal to transition the current role played by NTIA in the coordination of the Internet's domain name system (DNS).

Introduction of DotConnectAfrica

DotConnectAfrica (DCA) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization that has its base of operation in Nairobi, Kenya and headquartered in I/F River Court 6th Denis Street Port Louis, Mauritius, Africa, [Reg.ID CT8710DCA90](#)). Its main charitable objects are: (a) for the advancement of education in information technology to the African society; and (b) in connection with (a) to provide the African society with a continental Internet [domain name](#) to have access to Internet services for the people of Africa as a purpose beneficial to the public in general. DCA is well represented in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, London United Kingdom, and California, USA.

DotConnectAfrica (DCA) has been spearheading the proposed new Top Level Domain (TLD) .africa (DotAfrica) Initiative since 2006. DotAfrica is one of the new generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs) that will be delegated into the root zone of the Internet Domain Name Structure (DNS) by the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a US-based institution that is at the apex of Global Internet Governance.

As an independent Non-Profit, non-partisan entity, DCA Trust intends to utilize surplus proceeds from the registry operation accruing to the Trust Fund for Charitable projects. Funds will be regularly allocated to different corporate social responsibility programs. Specific projects will be identified, and supported. As the first gTLD for Africa, it will aim at bridging the digital divide that exists between other regions of the Internet community and Africa by promoting the use of ICT for development. DotAfrica gives a positive branding opportunity for Africa that will benefit all Africans and in the use of technology to power their businesses.

DotConnectAfrica and its Principal and Members have in the past has worked or been advisors with International organizations such as Organization for Africa Union (OAU) aka Africa Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and International and regional organizations such as the Corporate

Council on Africa (CCA), Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and (ICANN), The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), The Internet Society (ISOC), Internationalized Domain Resolution Union (IDRU), Internet Business Council for Africa (IBCA), and various private sector technology companies in Africa and internationally, with a view to increase synergy that encourages all stakeholders to participate in this dialog, in particular the African Diaspora.

Back ground of internet Governance and Role of ICANN

ICANN's role has been mainly in the management of the DNS Root, the addressing system of the internet. However there have been discussions and intentions to globalize ICANN's roles.

During the ITU Conference WCIT-2012 While addressing the opening ceremony, Fadi Chehadé is on record stating that his presence at WCIT-12 is due to his and ICANN's firm belief in the power of engagement. Mr. Chehadé called it new season of engagement at ICANN, and for cooperation between ICANN and ITU, Mr. Chehadé believes that ITU and ICANN have complementary functions to facilitate and in the future, will cooperate in good spirit, while clearly respecting each organization's distinct roles.

Most recently post the Snowden revelations on Surveillance, ICANN has been taken to take a lead role to transition the ICANN roles away from the USA oversight and into a global structure that is yet to be conceptualized and structured.

- Links: <http://www.itu.int/en/wcit-12/Documents/speech-wcit-12-chehade.pdf>
<http://blog.icann.org/2012/12/wcit-in-conclusion/>

Benefits of Multistakeholder Approach

ICANN becomes the center stage of the bottom up process that is the multistakeholder approach, some of the benefits of a multistakeholder approach are:

Bottom up flow.

This is a grassroots level contribution mode that thrives rather than the Board of Directors solely declaring what topics ICANN will address, members of working groups and constituencies will structure and develop strategies and way forward proposals that build into acceptable policy document

Consensus

Decisions based on consensus provide and acceptable results that are agreed upon though majority contributions. This is a magnificent way of dealing with developmental processes; however this advantage can also be a demerit when a minority contribution cannot voice its opinions however valid they may be.

Focus Areas and the Future Of a Globalized ICANN

While the leaders of the Internet technical organizations responsible for coordination of the Internet infrastructure (IETF, IAB, RIRs, ccTLD ROs, ICANN, ISOC, and W3C), welcome the US Government's announcement of the suggested changes related to the IANA functions contract, the roles on policy development processes of the Internet technical organizations and ICANN's role as administrator of the IANA functions should remain unchanged.

Accountability and Transparency

The Multistakeholder model thrives on the coalescing of ideas and procedures however this must be matched with an accountable process that has its own structured checks and balances. Without the presence of a transparent way of managing decision making there will arise issues of mistrust and thus accountability will be questioned.

While ICANN seeks to manage its own expanding roles, ICANN must think clearly and develop concise and succinct structures that will create trust within and

without ICANN. This way any decisions made as regards development, decline of requests and others will be taken in good faith.

ICANNs expanding role must have a clear oversight so that it can undertake its tasks without the risk of becoming an all powerful institution that is not accountable to anyone. The DNS root is an important tool and resource to the world and as such must be protected from all forms of abuse whether from within ICANN or from governments or institutions. The sanctity and freedom of the internet must be protected from all negative processes or decisions.

Conflict of Interest is an issue that has remained to affect ICANN's functions and structures. While ICANN and other stakeholders discuss the possibility of expanding its roles, Conflict of Interest within ICANN board and staff must be carefully thought of and honestly discussed and mitigation structures be provided to complement the ICANN Bylaws.

GAC and Governments

ICANN has been in existence since 1998. One of its functions is to deal and work closely with the governments hence the introduction of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC), which is composed of representatives of a large number of national governments from all over the world.

The GAC as an arm of ICANN currently functions without a defined structure to mitigate its own conflicts of interest and these impacts greatly on the functions and decisions of ICANN. Just as ICANN has created its own ways of managing conflict of interest, GAC which is a point of contact between ICANN and Governments must now be allowed to create a policy document to manage transparency, accountability and conflict of interest issues.

State of Equality of Purpose and Functions in a Globalized ICANN

The Internet is a tool that was developed in the US. ICANN being a US organization is subject to the American constitution and law. As ICANN seeks to

expand its roles and become globalized, its functions must be felt by the international users equally and indiscriminately.

Global regulations such as those of the government tend to provide such fairness, since all participants must abide by the same rules. It is clear that not all regions in the world share the same level of technology or awareness to the impacts on the internet, Africa is such an example.

ICANN's roles must therefore be introduced to all regions irrespective of their status in technology. This means that the regional Internet registries (*RIRs*) as organizations that manage the allocation and registration of Internet number resources within a particular region will continue to expand and deliver services equally.