
DURBAN – Middle East Engagement Strategy: Implementation Plan

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BAHER ESMAT: Good morning. Welcome. This is the Middle East Strategy update, and my name is Baher Esmat. I'm the regional VP for ICANN in the Middle East, and I'm joined today by members of the Middle East Strategy Working Group. I'll have them introduce themselves, so I can start with right-hand side. Ifikhar, go ahead.

SYED IFIKHAR: My name Syed Iftikhar. I'm a member of GAC and also [inaudible] of Pakistan and also the member of this study foreign relation committee.

SOPHIE MADDENS: Good morning. My name is Sophie Maddens. I'm senior director of Global Services of the Internet Society, also in charge of drafting our Middle Eastern strategy.

ZAHID JAMIL: Hi, Zahid Jamil, Domain Name Center. I'm also member of the BC and councilor on the GNSO.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Sarmad Hussain, I'm a professor of computer science at [Engineering] University in Lahore, Pakistan.

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BAHER ESMAT: And we have one remote speaker. Fahd, can you hear us?

FAHD BATAYNEH: Yeah. I can hear you. Can you hear me?

BAHER ESMAT: Yeah, can you introduce yourself quickly?

FAHD BATAYNEH: Okay. So good morning, everybody. My name is Fahd Batayneh. I'm from Jordan. I run the ccTLD of Jordan. I'm also a member of ccNSO and I'm a member of the Strategy [Inaudible].

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you. So we're going to go ahead and start. So this is an update on the Middle East strategy work which started six, seven months back with a group of volunteers from the ICANN community. We're presenting all stakeholders from governments, business, academia, ccTLD, managers, ISOC chapters, civil society, as well as regional and international organizations. They come from 11 different countries.

They have been working on an engagement strategy – ICANN engagement strategy – for the region. And we presented a draft strategy in Beijing back in April, and the final strategy document was finalized early May, and since then, the group has been working on the implementation plan, the specific projects and activities that we're

going to implement during year one, which is ICANN fiscal year 14. The implementation plan, the full document, has also been posted online.

So just to give you a quick background on what was in the strategy, it was three-year strategy. It highlights the main goals, strategic goals. There were three main goals fostering engagement, two-way engagement between ICANN and the Middle East community building a strong and competitive DNS industry and promoting multi-stakeholder Internet governance model in the region.

The group also identified three main strategic areas to work on. The Domain Name Industry was one, DNS Security & Stability was two, and the Internet governance ecosystem was the third one, and with each area, there were a specific set of objectives and the recommendations that the group have put forward. And then moving to the implementation plan, the group started to look into the specific projects that need to be implemented under each strategic areas in order to achieve the objectives and recommendations.

So I'm going to turn it over to Sarmad Hussain and Zahid who are going to walk us through the first element of the plan. Sarmad?

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

Thanks, Baher. So the main objective of this area has been to develop relevant capacity resources and Internet infrastructure in the region in a coordinated, comprehensive, and sustainable fashion so that security and stability needs of DNS in the region can be addressed.

As Baher said, we started at high level goals, but eventually, through the process came down to specific actions which we want to undertake over the next three years and then specifically during the next one year, and what I'm actually going to present is a subset of actions which we have decided the details of those actions are given in reports which are published online. So these are the subset of actions which we are focusing on during the first year of this implementation strategy.

So I'll talk about the first and the third, and then I'll request Zahid to come and comment on the second one. So one of the key challenges which we report and which needs to be addressed to create awareness of DNS security and stability policy and practice. And in addition to that, we also need to have concrete training on tools to assess the health of DNS by the people who are in the region. To enable that, basically, what we are planning is two workshops, one within the first year, as it says – one in the second quarter and one in the fourth quarter. Out of the multiple possibilities which we have which include [Inaudible] registry operations, At-Large registry operations and skill registry operations.

The main – in a way, audience for these trainings are policymakers, law enforcement agencies, registrars, registries and ISPs in the region, but also academia and other research organizations. Exact dates or exact partners are still being discussed, and those will be finalized over time, so very quickly, to Zahid. So let's go forward, and Zahid will come back and talk about timelines.

One of the things which we want to do as for technology is concern is develop a regional taskforce to address some of the more urgent needs

in this area. Basically, we want to focus on Arabic script, internationalized domain names through this taskforce, and the main focus on the taskforce is to look at more urgently, if you're aware, there's a callout for generation panels by the ICANN Variant TLD project, so there needs to be community, in a way, action to address – to develop a generation panel. So that's one of the first things this taskforce will do is take up that task and develop a generation panel for summation to ICANN.

This taskforce will also be looking at internationalized registration data aspects from the perspective off Arabic script and also other issues which are generally applicable to universal acceptability of IDNS – Arabic script, IDN, specifically and their variants.

We are also going to be doing general technical training in the area so that we can develop trainers who can then, in turn, go and do further trainings at national levels. These trainings will be focused on DNS SEC, [inaudible], and IPv6 and we are planning to have at least two of these trainings in the first year, in first and third quarters.

We're also looking forward to increasing the root server instances in the region, and there are ongoing talks with [Inaudible] and other stakeholders to enable that, and that's an ongoing activity, which will hopefully result in some more instances of root server in the region over the next few years. So I'll now hand it to Zahid to talk about the [inaudible] conventions and greater awareness of them in the region.

ZAHID JAMIL:

Thank you, Sarmad. I surely cannot cover the technical aspects of security, so I'm grateful that you've given me the time for the legal side. The purpose of us including this in the section is a couple of things. It's not in any way inconsistent to something ICANN is already doing in some ways. Jeff Mossestein with Day Specs Piscatelle especially being engaged with the Commonwealth Cyber Crime Initiative, being engaged in the Caribbean recently last year in doing initiatives with the ccTLDs on the ground as partners to deliver trainings, workshops, awareness and really sort of try and explain how to deal with these cyber security threats, as well as from a technical perspective are an ongoing process.

What we thought – and this is why the Middle Eastern stakeholders we're working with thought that this would be a good idea – is that there's a lot of this work that needs to be done in the Middle Eastern context, and there is a lot of confusion. I come from Pakistan. I can tell you there are a lot of things. People trying to block and filter the internet and other aspects, and sometimes we can get into a little trouble, and it's better to have a clear defined input from ICANN and other technical organizations.

Now, specifically in this area, once you have a cyber security threat, would you want to go that one extra step and say, "Well, do we want to prosecute [inaudible]?" And the trouble is that a lot of times, whatever you might do collaboratively, people, doesn't necessarily have any basis in law. So many of the countries that don't have the legislation or the legislative capabilities can be assisted to develop those, one. Two, a lot of them don't have necessarily the bilateral or multi-lateral relationships

with other countries or law enforcements to be able to actually cooperate.

Trying to basically help them in doing that there are conventions out there. The only one that I can think of at the moment is the Budapest Convention of Cyber Crime, things of that nature that could also be part of this process.

But it's important to also mention that this would not go beyond the scope of what it is that ICANN does as its core mission. It would basically be working with [inaudible] in that space, so when they get sort of really detailed and technical about conventions and stuff, you'd call up on the convention to come and sort of assess, or if it gets to a state where there needs to be a collaboration or negotiation of any sort in [MLAD], that's when ICANN can assist getting parties together to talk to each other.

Creating awareness in the workshops and doing trainings on the ground for this purpose is for law enforcement, etc., how to do these things would be something that ICANN, I think, in the region would be well-encouraged and welcome, too. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you. Thank you, Sarmad, thank you, Zahid. I'll now turn it over to Sophie who is going to tell us more about domain name industry.

SOPHIE MADDENS:

Thank you, Baher. And indeed, the objective of ICANN's engagement in the Middle East for the domain name industry is to build the domain name industry in the region and strengthen the overall ecosystem. I think most of the focus of this particular activity or set of activities is to create awareness, to build capacity, to mentor participants, to facilitate collaboration.

Before I get into the details of this particular activity, though, I just wanted to clarify or illustrate that I'm jumping into this part of the presentation not only to present these activities but also to illustrate where and how the partnerships between ICANN and other stakeholders in the internet ecosystem can collaborate, can participate.

So how there is the partnership between the different ISTAR organizations? We saw the successful partnership and collaboration only this week here in Durban on the DNS forum, and we took that and we took that into the Middle Eastern strategy as well. We saw how the organizations pulled together and worked together to pull together this very successful and interesting workshop.

First of all, thank you, ICANN. As the previous speaker also said, thank you for inviting the various stakeholders, too, including ISOC to participate in the Middle Eastern Working Group. I think it's very important to get the input and also to get your input to our own Middle Eastern strategy which we are defining as well. And as you can see in this particular activities, as well, you also have the ISOC chapters that are very active and that have actively contributed to defining the particular activities in the three areas being discussed.

This area, in particular, is one where we envisage collaborating. There is one activity, in particular, that's very focused and upcoming in the near coming future. We envisage collaborating and bringing the DNS forum before the end of the year, thus my intervention here, and we look forward to working with you in all the activities across the three domains.

So to come back to the slides, to come back to the matrix, as I said previously, the focus is really partnering, collaborating, mentoring. The activities are to partner with the regional stakeholders and assist with the funding to conduct road shows, workshops, seminars and training programs on the registry-registrar model and provide the guidance and support to current ICANN accredited registrars from the regions to address their sustainability issues. We also have partnering various activities within that.

So one of the activities that we are envisaging is the DNS forum hopefully before the end of this year. Again, very structured, very similar to what you saw in the DNS forum in the last week here in Durban. ISOC will collaborate with ICANN on this and possibly with other partners, and we're reaching out to stakeholders, the CCDLD registries, the registrars, the GTLD registries, ICANN accredited registrars – so a whole range of participants and stakeholders that we aim to reach with this particular activity.

We also aim to put into place two workshops focused on either the registry-registrar business models and trends and the ccTLD operations, the ASII and IDNs. Again, we envisage that this would be a collaboration.

We would pull in ISOC Lebanon, the University of Engineering and Technology of Lahore. These are the potential partners. Partners that have said that they would be willing to consider working together on this, and again, looking at the different stakeholders, the stakeholders are similar to the DNS forum. With that, Baher, I'd like to hand the floor back to you. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you. Thank you, Sophie. Thank you very much. Fahd, are you still online?

FAHD BATAYNEH: Yeah, I'm online.

BAHER ESMAT: Okay. Can you go ahead with the next part?

FAHD BATAYNEH: Okay. Thank you, Baher. So the third and final part of the strategy is going to talk about Internet governance. The objective in discussing the Internet governance [Inaudible] is actually promote engagement and encourage participation of relevant stakeholders in relevant foras.

Just a quick recap. Actually, the process, let's say the first AIGF meeting convened in Kuwait City last October. This year, the second AIGF meeting is going to take place in Algiers, the capital of Algeria during the first week of October. And the first time in Algeria was actually a

success. Being a member of the Arab Stakeholder Advisory Group, they do not expect such a success. That's a quick history of the AIGF process.

In the implementation plan for year one, the group actually, we [Inaudible] three main action items to focus on in an attempt to push the Internet governance ecosystem concept, let's say, in the region. So one of the action items we're going to focus on is to complement [Inaudible] with [Inaudible] support existing Internet governance mechanisms structured by Algeria. Another action item would be to develop and sponsor outreach programs and initiatives and partnership with national and regional stakeholders in order to stimulate interest foras.

The third and final action item would be to develop and sponsor capacity building programs to stimulate models for multi-stakeholder bottom-up consensus driven policy development process.

Now, we turn to the first action item which is to complement and [inaudible] and support existing Internet governance mechanisms. Our main activity is to actually support the development of multi-stakeholder process at national and regional levels, and we are targeting the first quarter of ICANN's fiscal year to fulfill this. Of course our partners in this are going to be ISOC and ISOC Lebanon and we are going to be eyes up and eyes at Lebanon, and we identify all stakeholders.

In terms of the second action on developing and sponsoring outreach programs, we then focus on summer school. We have the European

summer school on Internet governance, we have the south summer school internet governance. So we, as a group, and in collaboration with the Arab AIGF agree that having a Middle Eastern Internet governance summer school would actually help push the concept of Internet governance in the region. We are targeting the fourth quarter for this activity to take place. Since we believe that there are a lot of preparations required, not to mention that there are many, let's say, potential partners involved – mainly the Arab AIGF, the [inaudible] AfriNIC, ISOC Lebanon and Google. Of course, we are targeting all the stakeholders as usual.

In terms of the third and final action on developing and sponsoring capacity-building programs, I mean, we're talking here about various sorts of capacity building programs whether face-to-face workshops, whether road shows, whether online training, and we could start working on – and we have plans on starting to work on it as early as the second quarter of the year. Again, potential partners on the Arab AIGF, the [inaudible], AfriNIC and ISOC. And of course we are targetting stakeholders. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you. Thank you, Fahd. Now in terms of timeline and as my colleagues have said, we planned a number of activities over the next year which is again fiscal year 14 which begins July 1, 2013, so it has already started. So Q1 is July, August, September; Q2 is October thorough December and so on. And there are a number of activities planned in each quarter, and then there are other activities that will be

ongoing like over the year like increasing number of L-root and promoting the hosting of L-root instances. This is something that is ongoing.

The IDN Regional Taskforce is also an effort that is going to last for more than one of two quarters. Same for the train the trainer concept. So there are a number of projects that will continue over the year, and they may also continue over the next years. And again, one thing I want to emphasize is the fact that ICANN is not implementing this as ICANN. This is a community effort.

There are a number of – as you’ve seen in the presentation – a number of very committed partners that want to contribute to this effort from international organizations like ISOC and the Regional Internet Registries, regional players in Pakistan, in Jordan, in Lebanon, in [Qatar]. So we are coordinating with them very closely, especially in activities in relation to capacity building. This is an area where there have been many players in this field from the Internet community, ISOC and the RIRs in particular. So we’re coordinating with them very closely. For instance, if we’re talking about something in North Africa, so we’re working closely with AfriNIC, and they indicated the type of activities and projects they’re planning for for this year, so we can sync together.

As I said, the implementation plan has been posted online. Right now – and this is in terms of next steps – the Strategy Working Group is discussing the specific actions we want to undertake in order to get things off the ground.

The notion is that we're going to continue as a group to oversee the execution of the implementation plan at least for the first year, and later on, if we realize that we need more of a structured way of doing things like to monitor, to assess progress, to evaluate the matrix because one of the better parts of this strategy was for each and every strategic [Inaudible], there were specific matrix by which we can measure progress and improvement.

If we realize down the road that well, the bandwidth available for the group to follow up on the different activities is not enough to do the proper evaluation, as well, of the overall work, then we might think of expanding the group and calling for more people to join or we might realize that we need a separate group to do the evaluation part. So this is something we'll continue as a group to discuss over the next few months, but for the time being, for year one, we're going to continue as one group on implementing this plan.

We have an e-mail if anyone wants to write any feedback or send us any comments. Please have this e-mail. It's meswg@icann.org. Just before we conclude, I'd like to ask my colleague, Iftikhar, if he wants to add anything or if you have any comments.

IFTIKHAR SHAH:

Thank you, Baher. Because I'm representing the government, we also need the support from the government, from Middle East especially, regarding our action plan. And we also need support regarding the needs of the countries regarding especially the DNS security and

stability, Internet governance ecosystem. Like we say, the IPv6, what are the current challenges on IPv6? Generally, there is lack of awareness, there is a lack of regulations at the governments. We also seek these comments especially from the government sectors. Thank you. [Inaudible]. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Iftikhar. Are there any questions or comments? Any feedback? Any criticism? [Sammy], please go ahead. Do we have a mic? If not, you can come over to our table and use this one. I think we can use this mic. Yeah. Okay. There it is.

[SAMMY]: Thank you. Thank you, Baher, for the presentation. I think it's a good opportunity to be here to see the update on the plan.

BAHER ESMAT: Just for the record, can you introduce yourself?

[SAMMY]: Yes, I'm [Samasalah]. I'm from the Telecom Regulator of Sudan. So I have just a few issues, three, and I think it's all in common in one title. We're here to talk about the engagement. So I'm looking through the hole. I think in our region, frankly, we didn't trust working with ICANN. In Sudan, we have this issue, and I think, in our region, we also have the same issue. You, as ICANN, have to build this trust relationship. I can

give you hints. You have to maybe implement project. You have make successful studies. You have to make [inaudible] those countries just to convince them to join in this. I think it's a helpful strategy, but you have to convince people to work with you.

In capacity-building, in Sudan, we start working with the IPv6 with collaboration with AfriNIC, with ITU, with other institutes. We go as far as to Malaysia to bring training material from [inaudible] from your University of Malaysia. We didn't think about ICANN because of the same problem.

I think we do good steps towards IPv6. We have [ALAC]. We have more than 350 participants we're now training. We have more than eight engineers that are trained as the trainers, and they provide the courses. And recently, we contacted the ITU just to organize as an IPv6 training session in Sudan for quality, for our neighbor, I mean, African and the [inaudible] region, and I think we can start cooperating with ICANN by offering our lab, our facilities, to be under your service.

We need fellowships. I talk with you about the problem we had for fellowships for the Sudanis from ICANN. I don't know what you can do regarding this. Is it under your capacity as Vice VP for our region? We need to rebuild this trust or build this from scratch because I never heard about cooperation between my country and your organization. Sso I think this help. We can do good steps. Just concentrate on implementing a project in our region and make a successful study and [progress]. Thank you.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you. Thank you, [Sammy]. That's very useful. Let me try to react to some of the points you mentioned, and then I'm sure my colleagues will also have something to add. On the engagement part and talking about the region as a whole, I agree with you. I mean, we need to do more, we need to do better, and this was one of the key drivers behind this whole work.

I mean, when we started talking to people back in October last year when we had the [inaudible] AIGF in Kuwait, and then we followed up in several other meetings. The main feedback is that, well, ICANN is not doing enough, so you need to do more, and then we started this effort.

Now, this is not going to be the end of the journey. I mean, the strategy or the implementation plan is not going to solve everything, and also, ICANN alone cannot do everything. I mean, not only we need partnership with our global leaders like ISOC and others, but we also need partners from the region to work with from different stakeholders, and I think you are proposing about the IPv6 lab is a very good one.

On the fellowship issue, I only knew about it here in Durban when you brought it to up to me, and I took note of it. I sent an e-mail to my colleagues, and I'll get back to you on this thing. Again, one of the main activities of this plan is to try to not as ICANN to be honest, but again, as community members, to try to encourage more participation in the fellowship program, try to stimulate opportunities of fellowships, try to get people to learn about ICANN, so when we get the pool of candidates for fellowships, we can see a pool of good and qualified candidates from the region as well. I'll check if my colleagues have anything to add.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Baher, can I make a comment, please?

BAHER ESMAT: Sure, go ahead, Fahd.

FAHD BATAYNEH: Okay. So in reply to the gentleman’s inquiry about the fellowship issue – and I’m speaking in my capacity as a member of the ICANN Fellowship Selection Committee – in selecting fellows, we do not look at issues such as which country they come from or from what region they represent or who are their employers or what is the status of their country with Western powers or stuff like that. We evaluate applications based on what the application contains.

We are five members of this selection committee, and of course, we receive a huge number of applications, and of course, ICANN has a certain budget to, I believe, bring in 25 participants. So for example, when evaluating the fellowship round for Durban, we have 98 applications, and I believe 25 were chosen. Looking at Beijing, for example, we had 204 applications, and 25 were accepted. Okay. I think there is some echo.

BAHER ESMAT: Fahd, we can still hear you.

FAHD BATAYNEH:

Okay. So in selecting, we look at regions and we try to create a balance in terms of regions and in terms of gender. I can also remember from past fellowship rounds – and I wasn't a member of the selection committee at that time – we did have a couple of colleagues from Sudan attending the fellowship program, and so I'm really not sure. I mean, in what way can the Fellowship Committee assist Sudan in having more fellows on the fellowship program? It's a little bit confusing to me, actually.

BAHER ESMAT:

Okay. Thank you, Fahd. I think just to clarify, the specific case that [Sammy] was referring to with regard to the fellowship program, there was an accepted fellow from Sudan for the Durban meeting, and he was accepted and then he was requested to defer to the next ICANN meeting in Buenos Aires for reasons that I'm not sure whether they were clarified or not. So this is what I heard from [Sammy], and this is what I took note of, and I'm going to investigate with the people in charge of this program in ICANN and get back to him. So this is case or the specific example he was referring to in this case, but as you said, it's true that in the past, we had fellows from Sudan in very different meetings. But I'll get back to Sammy on this specific case. Are there any other comments or questions? Go ahead.

FARZA NABYDIA:

Is it on? Yes, it is on. Hi, my name is Farza Nabydia. I'm an ICANN fellow, and my question is that so we have the Middle East, and region-wise,

what do you define as Middle East? Which countries do they cover because I can see Pakistan here, and while Pakistan and by some definition is not Middle East, and if you are going to cover more countries, then maybe a change in the title or also maybe we can include Afghanistan in that way. Yeah.

BAHER ESMAT:

Thanks. This is a good question. Again, without going into the details of the ICANN regional of thing, but let me tell you. So Middle East is not one of the five ICANNs regions. However, from administrative point of view, it's one of the regions that we as staff are serving. So we have Asia-Pacific as part of the larger Asia, we have Russia and some of the adjoining countries as part of Eastern Europe, we have Middle East, we have Caribbean as part of Latin-America and Caribbean and all this, and this is the region I've been responsible for for the past seven years. It actually includes countries from Egypt all the way to Pakistan and Afghanistan, including Iran and the rest of Arab countries in the Asian parts, not in Africa.

Now when we started this work, one of the comments or feedback we got from people in the community was that ICANN should include North Africa in this strategy. You [can't] go and talk about strategy in the Middle East, including some Arab countries and not including the rest. So even though North Africa is still part of Africa as far as ICANN's regions is concerned, but North Africa is part of this strategy, as well.

When we started the work, some working group members, they noted the same thing. I mean, they had the same comment, and there was suggestion, and that was clearly stated in the strategy document that we call the region Middle East and adjoining countries. So even though it doesn't appear in this presentation, it was stated very clearly in the document that it's Middle East and adjoining countries.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE:

You have a remote question. This is from Celia Lerman of the Latin-American E-Commerce Institute. Just to understand the strategy better, what is the total term from implementation? Is it one year only or longer as the other regional strategies, Latin America, Caribbean, Africa? I'd be grateful if you could briefly tell us a bit more on why the strategy is centered on engagement mostly as compared to the other strategies. Does the strategy have a more limited mandate or just a more limited title?

BAHER ESMAT:

Okay. I can take part of this. So strategy is a three-year strategy, and we're going to implement it over the three years. Today, we're talking about implementation plan for year one. In probably ten months from now, we will have the implementation plan for year two and so on and so forth.

On the why the strategy is mainly focusing on engagement, again, this was the working groups' sort of input and feedback. So maybe I'd like to hear from them if there were specific reasons why they focused mainly

on engagement, though I could also note that there were a couple of more projects like the IDN Regional Taskforce that actually goes beyond engagement. But does anyone want to comment?

ZAHID JAMIL:

I think it's very important to reiterate something that was said earlier. This is not an ICANN strategy. This is a community strategy of independent actors who are getting together, and they're being facilitated by ICANN, so it necessarily does not conform to the sort of processes necessarily that ICANN has internally or dictated to. So that's one of the reasons. Sort of taking baby steps.

In fact, we had a conversation yesterday where the idea was that this first year would sort of like a pilot project. There's a lot that we need to do to reach out to people, to do outreach, to do a few projects, and that will give us better understanding what we need to do as a strategy in say year two or year three, so that's why I don't think we're sort of trying to come up with a three-year strategy immediately and crystallize it.

BAHER ESMAT:

Any other comments? I can see none. Okay. So I'd like to thank you very much for coming. I'd like to thank my panelists, those who are in the room and also those who are remote. Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE:

Thank you so much.

[END OF AUDIO]