

From: Avri Doria, Chair of the GNSO Council

Thursday, 5 February 2009

To: Chairman of the ICANN Board, Mr. Peter Dengate-Thrush

Dear Peter,

Given that ICANN staff will be scheduling the upcoming ICANN meeting in Mexico City, Mexico in March, 2009, the GNSO Council thought it would be appropriate and prudent to put forward some thoughts and concerns regarding Public Participation, particularly within the scheduled Public Forum sessions. Whilst there are certainly other areas of concern, the GNSO Council refers to and agrees with the ALAC Letter to the Board on Public Participation dated 11th of December, 2008.

Firstly, it is important to highlight that the GNSO Council understands and respects the time constraints and heavy schedule and workload of the ICANN Board and staff. The following comments are provided with these factors in mind.

The numbers of attendees at the ICANN Meetings continues to grow with representatives spanning the globe. For the vast majority of these attendees, the Public Forum sessions provide the only opportunity for attendees to communicate and interact with the ICANN Board. Accordingly, the GNSO Council trusts that the ICANN Board is fully aware of how important it is to provide opportunities for direct public input and questions. This is especially true given the magnitude and impact of the many topics that are currently being tabled and debated within ICANN and the Domain Name Industry.

As has been publicly noted, most attendees of the ICANN Meeting in Cairo were very disappointed by the extraordinarily limited time available for public participation at the Public Forum Sessions. It is also noted that ICANN staff, under direction of the Chairman, allowed for questions to be posted after the Meeting and subsequently answered by appropriate staff. The GNSO Council applauds this innovation particularly with the staff providing responses to direct questions.

Put simply, regardless of what scheduling issues arise, the GNSO Council believes that more time must be allocated for public participation.

As recently as the ICANN Meeting in Paris, each ICANN Meeting included two public forum sessions (often both over two hours in duration). As stated above, now, more than ever, it seems it would be completely appropriate to return to a similar schedule.

The quality of these sessions and the satisfaction of participants can often be gauged on the level of ICANN Board interaction. The GNSO Council would like the ICANN Board and staff to continue with the practice started in Cairo of responding directly to questions where appropriate, either at the time or in a

subsequent document to be published not long after the meeting, as was the case in Cairo. These sessions should not simply be 'one way traffic'. The audience benefits from hearing direct responses from the ICANN Board and staff on relevant issues. Many believe that it is the duty of a Board Member, in taking on the role, that they actively engage their constituents.

Finally, in a show of respect, the GNSO Council requests that all participants in the Public Forum sessions provide careful attention to the speakers and avoid activities that could distract from constructive dialogue.

By raising these important issues, the GNSO Council hopes to encourage the ICANN Board and staff to work collaboratively with the ICANN community to provide a sufficient platform for the public participation that is essential to ICANN's bottom-up policy development process.

The GNSO Council would be happy to assist the ICANN Board and staff in any way possible to ensure that future Public Forum sessions are never as limited as the one during the Cairo meeting and that the ICANN Meetings continue to be successful informational fora for debate and interaction.