

Candidate Statement for GNSO Council Chair

Candidate: Jonathan Robinson

Date: 3 October 2014

I am pleased to accept the nomination to continue in the role of Council Chair for a final term.

Overview

I previously (September 2012) provided a comprehensive candidate statement. The statement detailed my personal qualifications, as well as my views on the Role of the GNSO Council, and that of the GNSO Council Chair. Much of that statement remains relevant and it can be accessed here:

<http://gns0.icann.org/en/elections/robinson-statement-28sep12-en.pdf>

The 2012 statement follows as an appendix in this document and was updated with a candidate statement in November 2013 which can be found here:

<http://gns0.icann.org/en/elections/robinson-statement-08nov13-en.pdf>

Role of the GNSO Council

The fundamental basis on which the Council operates remains unchanged. The ICANN bylaws and the GNSO Operating Procedures are essentially the same. However, it is noteworthy that the process of reviewing the GNSO has now commenced.

The GNSO, the GNSO Council and arguably the whole ICANN multi-stakeholder model continue to face challenges from within and without. For example, the implementation and roll-out of the new gTLD programme has continued to throw up policy related issues and questions as well as test the relationship between policy and implementation. In addition, the overarching theme of the transition of stewardship of the IANA function and the associated accountability work have significantly attracted the attention of the broader community, arguably resulting in a distraction from the core GNSO business of policy development work.

Notwithstanding the existence of challenges, the Council has managed to function effectively. We have run regular meetings with comprehensive agendas including important discussion items and motions for key stages of specific policy development work. All of which are conducted in a collegial and constructive atmosphere. The Council has shown the discipline to stick to established principles and procedures of operation while recognising the need to be receptive to dynamic circumstances. The Council has also asserted its position where appropriate in order to reinforce both its role and the boundaries of its responsibility where necessary.

The tone for the work of the GNSO Council over the past year was set by the first ever induction and development session for the Council which was held at the end of the annual meeting in Buenos Aires. Initiatives for improvement and development were discussed and have been monitored throughout the course of the year. Ensuring that new councillors are appropriately inducted to the Council and oriented within the GNSO is a critical component of ensuring the effective working of the GNSO Council.

Role of the GNSO Council Chair

My view has been consistent in that the role of the Chair, together with the Council vice-chairs, is to ensure that the GNSO has a well-managed and effective council that functions well as a council as well as with the groups that make up the GNSO and the appropriate ICANN staff. The Chair should therefore seek to ensure that the Council is effectively connected with the GNSO SGs and constituencies through having direct contact with individual councillors and, where appropriate, with the leadership or membership of the relevant GNSO groups.

The Chair also has a form of public relations role in ensuring that the policy work of the GNSO is effectively articulated and understood in the broader community. For this reason, outreach and engagement with key ICANN staff, the ICANN board and other ICANN SO & ACs is vital. This creates challenges at times, such as when and how the Chair can represent the GNSO.

In addition to the effective week to week and month to month management of the Council's routine activities, the Chair also needs, together with the Council vice chairs and others, to look beyond the GNSO and to think ahead. The GNSO Council sits within the GNSO, the GNSO in turn within the ICANN bottom-up, multi-stakeholder model and ICANN itself within the broader international internet governance framework. Good progress has been made in the regular meetings with the ccNSO as well as with the GAC through the GAC / GNSO Consultation Group and the recent appointment of a GNSO Liaison to the GAC. This cross community and related work remains an area which needs focus and attention from the Chair.

Summary

The GNSO Council's ability to effectively commission and develop policy has to be seen, in part, as some of the proof of the effectiveness of the ICANN multi-stakeholder model. To the extent that our work goes well, we can be seen as part of the proof of the value and effectiveness of the model. To the extent that it does not, the opposite is true. A good chair and an effective council will play a significant part in ensuring the GNSO policy development does go well and, where it does not go as well as it could, to look for reasons why and appropriate responses to make sure it does go better in future.

I very much look forward to working with the Council, the Vice Chairs and the GNSO as a whole to ensure that we make a major contribution and that we are as successful as we possibly can be in our critical role at the heart of ICANN's multi-stakeholder model. There is a significant opportunity to build on some of the key initiatives that the Council has taken and with which I have been closely involved with as chair. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to work in the role as GNSO council chair, something I appreciate, understand and welcome.

Appendix 1

2012 Candidate Statement for GNSO Council Chair

Date: 28 September 2012

Personal Qualifications

I am an experienced company director, manager and specialist in a variety of areas which are directly relevant to the complex blend of issues that the GNSO Council has to navigate. As well as specialist domain name industry experience, I have broader international and multi-stakeholder environment experience gained in the academic, not-for-profit and public purpose areas. I have lived and worked for extended periods of time in both the developed and developing world. My style is that I value careful consideration, balanced judgement and ultimately, productive output.

My recent professional experience has included:

- Over 10 years as main board director of public, quoted company, Group NBT plc
- Over 10 years as non-executive director of Afilias Limited (.info, mobi & .pro)
- 3 x 2 years as a member elected non-executive director, Nominet (UK) Ltd (.uk)

Prior to the development of ICANN, I was involved in work which involved active participation in a series of international meetings and included a term as deputy chairman on the board of the Internet Council of Registrars (CORE) back in 1997. Since ICANN's inception, I have attended a minimum of one ICANN meeting per year and every meeting since being elected to the GNSO Council in December 2010.

I hold a BSc (Physics) and a PhD (Engineering) degree from the University of CapeTown, South Africa. I previously undertook research at the University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK, Imperial College, London, UK and the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories, University of California, USA.

Role of the GNSO Council

It is evident to all that ICANN is at an absolutely critical point in its development. The organisation has recently embarked on the execution phase of the most ambitious project and role in its history; and it is therefore now facing unprecedented operational and broader challenges, including to the ICANN model itself. ICANN's role and work is the focal point of international attention and scrutiny like never before, including from governments and a significant array of other interests.

It is within this broader context that we, the GNSO Council, need to re-establish, re-assert and re-focus on our essential role and function. The core role of the GNSO Council is to manage policy development in generic top level domain names and we need to be, and be seen to be, functional, effective and productive in undertaking that role. In doing this well, we will play our proper part in reinforcing, underpinning and adding value to the ICANN multi-stakeholder model.

Role of the GNSO Council Chair

The GNSO is one of three supporting organisations; however the GNSO Council is arguably the only place where the full diversity of the multi-stakeholder model comes together in full and in one, relatively small melting pot. Embracing diversity and ensuring effective output is a great challenge for the Council and therefore the councillors, the ICANN policy staff and the Council leadership, especially the Chair. I relish that challenge and feel that a fair, consensual approach with a focus on output is required to meet it.

In addition to managing the diversity of input, the sheer volume of work that the Council needs to deal with is an on-going challenge. Inroads have been made to dealing with the workload through practical enhancements in the way we work, such as maintaining schedules of on-going projects and the recent introduction of a consent agenda. I expect that further improvements to the functioning of the Council as well as to prioritising and managing of workload should be possible and will seek to achieve this.

The Council attracts significant attention because of its high profile and important role. The Chair must be cognisant of this and I believe that a good chair needs to be effective at engaging with the broader community, in order to ensure that the role and work of the Council is properly understood and appreciated. This is clearly a delicate position because it is not about representing specific positions that the Council may take or have taken but more about ensuring that the role, function and scope of the GNSO Council is properly understood and effectively represented.

I currently serve on the Council as a representative of the Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG). My vote in the Council is directed by the RySG and, should I be elected as chair, it will continue to be so. The role of the Chair is clearly distinct from and fundamentally different to the advocacy oriented role of a councillor representing a particular interest or stakeholder group within the Council. I understand the principle and practice of this and therefore, the change in role and behaviour that becoming a chair requires.

The fundamental job of the GNSO Council Chair is to ensure that the Council is and remains as productive and effective as possible. This can be achieved by recognising the diversity of views that necessarily exist within the Council and then facilitating a fair balance of these views whilst remaining focussed on the necessary output.

Summary

It is an honour to be nominated and, should I be elected, it will be a tremendous privilege to serve a term as the GNSO Council Chair. The job is no doubt a challenging one, perhaps even more so than ever before. I trust that this statement gives confidence to fellow councillors, and the groups that they represent on the Council, that I have the personal qualities, maturity and professional experience to do the job to the high standard it merits.

However, if elected, I will not expect to do the job alone but to work with the support of councillors, vice chairs and ICANN staff. I will work collaboratively and, whenever appropriate or necessary, rely on expertise other than my own.

I believe we should place significant value on the effective functioning of a GNSO Council where councillors can feel free to raise issues and vigorously argue the positions of the groups and the stakeholders that they represent. However, ultimately we should measure our success by the productive and effective output of the Council. As a councillor and prospective chair, I would like to see us all to be part of a GNSO Council that is respected and highly valued for our role and contribution, both by our immediate stakeholders as well as the broader ICANN and global internet communities.