
ICANN Transcription

IDNs EPDP

Thursday, 17 February 2022 at 13:30 UTC

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DEVAN REED:

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening. Welcome to the IDNs EPDP call taking place on Thursday, 17th of February, 2022 at 13:30 UTC. In the interest of time, there will be no roll call. Attendance will be taken by the Zoom room. If you're only on the telephone, could you please let yourselves be known now?

We have apologies from Jennifer Chung, Anil Kumar Jain and Jeff Neuman.

All members and participants will be promoted to panelists for today's call. Members and participants, when using the chat, please select everyone in order for everyone to see the chat. Observers will remain as an attendee and will have only view only chat access. Statements of interest must be kept up to date. If anyone has any updates to share, please raise your hand or

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speak up now. If you need assistance updating your statements of interest, please email the GNSO Secretariat.

All documentation and information can be found on the IDNs EPDP wiki space. Recordings will be posted on the public wiki space shortly after the call. Please remember to state your name before speaking for the transcript.

As a reminder, those who take part in the ICANN multistakeholder process are to comply with the expected standards of behavior. Thank you and over to our chair, Donna Austin, please begin.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks very much, Devan. And welcome everybody to this week's IDN EPDP call. We have a few items to note before we get into substantive discussion. So A5 and A6 language, we're hoping to close that out. I guess, it's early next week or was it this week. And as I said on the email chain, I'd really appreciate it if the respective representative groups could, if they're comfortable with the language, could actually confirm that on the email list rather than assuming that because you haven't provided any comments that everything is fine.

So Ariel's saying that's open until next Tuesday, so we look forward to your comments in the next few days. And Michael's already provided some comments which we've taken on board.

Was it this week? Earlier this week, the leadership team and staff met just to go through our project plan. And we recognize that we are probably not moving as swiftly through the questions as we had anticipated but we are going to submit a formal—I think it's a

project change request out to the council at this point because we'll just focus on the substantive points in the timeline.

So one of our key milestones is an initial report by September. So what we're going to do is we'll review that in about three months' time. And then we'll have a better sense of how much there may be a miracle and we may meet that target date but I don't think that's going to happen. But we'll review that again in three months and that hopefully will give us a better sense of what our timing looks like. That's something we've been doing in the background.

Just a reminder that next week the call will be 24 hours later. That's to accommodate the fact that ICANN prep week is taking place next week. So we would have been conflicting with another session. So the call has been moved by 24 hours. So just a reminder about that one.

For today's call, we're going to go back through—we had some discussion last week on D1b charter questions. And there were three parts to that and it was about the process for existing gTLD operators and how they could seek additional variants. There was the process for new applicants to seek—what's the process for new applicants to apply for a gTLD and then allocatable variants? And then there was a question about these.

What we're going to go through today is the piece about what's the process for an existing registry operator to seek to activate the allocatable variants? Ariel is going to take us through some background documents. We've got some data that we think is reasonably important to the conversation. And then when we get

through—identify this part 2 here, we want to have a conversation about part 3 specifically as it relates to an existing gTLD operator.

So what we're trying to do here is talk about these things in distinct parts and try not to conflate some of the challenges that there might be between a new applicant and the existing applicant and the fees that may apply to an existing gTLD operator and the new ones. So I'm going to try to delineate that, put a pretty hard line between that. So we're trying to take away any potential conflating of issues.

So primarily what we want to focus on today is part 2 that's identified on the screen. And then when we get to part 3, it will be the fees associated specifically with part 2. So that's what we're trying to focus most—what we expect most of the discussion will be on today.

So with that, I'm going to hand it over to Ariel who's going to take us through the background docs. So Ariel, over to you.

ARIEL LIANG:

Thanks very much, Donna. This is Ariel. So before we go into the background information about part 2, I'd like to provide a quick recap of part 1 which is the scenario where a new applicant seeks to apply for a new gTLD and allocatable variant labels of that gTLD.

So based on the discussion from last meeting, there is general agreement among the EPDP team that the applicant for the new gTLD and its variant labels that should go through one application

process. So in other words, the applicant will only be required to submit one application for the new gTLD and its variant label set.

So what the applicant needs to demonstrate is its ability to manage both the gTLD it applies for and its variant and explain how it can operate the set. So in the application form, there should be additional questions to address how the set will be handled operationally. So some members in the team support the idea of completing the evaluation objection of the variant sets upfront because all of these labels are going through the same process, so it's better to complete this first in order to reduce any redundancy and inefficiency down the road.

Physically, this part 1 is partially covered by the EPDP team where you have a—get a general sense where the direction is like but of course, details haven't been completely flushed out. But it's good that we have a general sense where the team is for part 1.

So now I will talk about part 2, which is the scenario where an existing registry operator seeks to activate allocatable variant labels of its existing gTLD. Based on last week's meeting, the team just began to discuss this scenario. So there is some question about whether the existing registry operator can seek to activate allocatable variant label in the application round or that could happen outside an application round.

And also, there is some question about whether the existing registry operator also needs to demonstrate its ability to manage the variant set it applies for. Similar as a new applicant. So we just start to have that discussion in order to help the team facilitate the deliberation of this question. The leadership team believed there

are some questions for the team to consider and also evaluate some existing data. And maybe that will help us to figure out the direction for this scenario.

So the first question is, what is the scope of existing gTLDs that have allocatable variant labels to potentially apply for? So this question is to understand the scope of the question. Physically, how big a pool there is for existing gTLD operators to potentially apply for allocatable variant.

And then the second sub-question is to understand what are the IDN-specific questions in the 2012 round. So that may help inform our discussion here in terms of what the registry operator needs to demonstrate those type of things. So we want to see how the application round in 2012 was like in terms of questions asked to IDN gTLD applicant.

And then the third is probably a very important thing is, we probably want to understand better how the application process looked like in the 2012 round. Previously, there was a high-level flowchart demonstrated in the earlier part of the deliberation last year. But there's actually a much more detailed flowchart to demonstrate all the process entailed in the 2012 round. So staff will provide an overview of that. So hopefully, by addressing these questions, we will have a better understanding of this part 2 and reach a direction in terms of how the recommendation might go.

To answer the first question in terms of the scope of the issue, basically, how many existing gTLDs can potentially apply for variant labels? So we took a look at the data that Sarmad and Pitinan collected last year. So they basically went through all the

existing gTLDs. That includes the delegated ones and also the ones in the pipeline. So in total, there are 1,265 existing gTLDs. And among them, close to 93% are gTLDs in Latin script, so that's 1,171. And the rest, 7.4% are non-Latin script gTLDs. So it's a total of 94 gTLDs in non-Latin script. So these are Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, Cyrillic, Devanagari, Korean, Hebrew and Thai.

And in the donut chart on the screen, you can see that the Chinese script is dominating and there's 53 of them. And then followed by Arabic and Japanese, so that's 13 each. So when we look at these non-Latin script gTLDs, the ones that actually have allocatable variants is only Chinese and Arabic and we learn that through examining the RZ-LGR script rules. So only in the Chinese and Arabic they have allocatable variant. The others may either have variants but they are non-allocatable or they don't have variants at all.

So in total, there are 66 existing gTLDs that may potentially apply for allocatable variant labels. And I see Maxim has his hand up. Donna, I'm wondering, should I stop for now and let Maxim ask his question or should I keep going?

DONNA AUSTIN:

Let's see what Maxim's question is and then we'll decide whether it's something we're going to cover or something new. So I think, Maxim, go ahead.

MAXIM ALZOBA:

Maxim Alzoba for the record. Do you hear me?

DONNA AUSTIN: Yes, Maxim.

MAXIM ALZOBA: Clarification question. Is the list of IDNs TLDs which now allow variants or a list of IDN TLDs which potentially could allow variants? Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN: I think the next slide will answer your question, Maxim. Do you agree, Ariel?

ARIEL LIANG: Maybe I can just quickly explain it. Currently, gTLDs at the top level, variants are not allowed because we're still in the process of this PDP and until the policy work is done, and their recommendations developed, then we will have a clear direction in terms of how to manage the variant at the top level. So currently, it's not allowed but in the next chart which I will show right now is, in the 2012 rounds, the applicants were asked to identify variant labels on their own. So it's I guess a way to gauge what they understood as variants.

This is a question in the 2012 round but of course, those self-identified variants have no legal standing. It's just a way to understand whether they understand there's a set of variants that related to—apply for gTLDs. I hope that addressed your question, Maxim.

So now I'm just going to talk about this chart. Of course, when the applicant was asked to identify these variants, we don't know the exact intention whether they think these variants needs to be allocated or it needs to be blocked because in 2012, disposition values were not formed. Although there's some applicants, they kind of identify that they have a preferred label. And then, the rest of the variants probably can be perceived as blocked in our interpretation. And then some applicant indicated that they want to have a set of variants.

So based on that interpretation, perhaps they want these variants they identified to be allocatable. But of course, those were not explicitly asked in the 2012 round. However, the applicants did indicate variant based on their understanding and based on their IDN table back in the day. So that's why we got this chart just to show you how the numbers may look like.

So if you look at this chart, it's basically including the Arabic and Chinese script gTLDs. So out of these 13 Arabic existing gTLDs, three of them identified variants in the application. And out of the 55 Chinese existing gTLDs, 41 identified variants. And you can see this chart is basically a long tail, meaning that there are a few identified—a large number of variants. But most of them is remaining the small amount like one or two variants.

So we just took a closer look at it. Among the Arabic gTLDs, the three of them each identified one or five or seven variants. And then among the Chinese gTLDs, it's a range. So a lot of them are guided by only one variant or two variants or three. But then there are also applicants that have identified 4 or 5. 7, 8, 9 – 11 and 17

variants. And we can see what they are so basically the top 1. Amazon identified 17 variants which is quite a lot.

Once we look at Sarmad and Pitinan's spreadsheet, even though there's a lot of self-identified variants, but based on the RZ-LGR rule, not all of them are allocatable. And in fact, most of them are not allocatable. So on average, it's about 0 to 2 variants among the self-identified ones are allocatable. So that's just to show you that if today we're asking these existing gTLD registry operators, do you want to apply for a variant label? Maybe. Based on what they identified in the past, we can kind of gauge the potential interest whether they wish to apply today. And if so, how many they can potentially apply?

These are based on our assumption of the data. We have to ask that question explicitly. So I will stop here now. Donna, would you like to have folks to ask questions about this chart or should I proceed to the next part?

DONNA AUSTIN:

Yeah. Thanks, Ariel. If anyone does have questions, feel free to ask them now. But I think what's important about this data is it gives us an idea of the potential scope. For some reason, in my head, I thought maybe we'd be talking about six existing gTLDs but obviously, it's much more than that. It's potentially 66 existing applicants that could seek—request variants in some way.

So I think that's important as we talk about the process for how the existing IDN gTLD operators could apply for the variants. So we just thought this was an important data point. Hadia, go ahead.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you. This is Hadia for the record. And my question was in relation to what you just mentioned, Donna. So existing gTLDs would require a new round in order to apply for the variants since in 2012, they did not apply for those variants, though they did identify them, or because they did identify them, so we already associate those variant labels to them and they do not need to wait for a round. Is this what we are talking about?

DONNA AUSTIN: Correct, Hadia. We need to have a discussion and decide how we – what’s the best process to—for existing gTLDs to apply for variants if they wish to do so. Edmon, go ahead.

EDMON CHUNG: I don’t know if Hadia wants to follow up. Maybe she should go first because I’m talking about a slightly different –

DONNA AUSTIN: Okay. Hadia, do you have a follow up?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Yes, I would just also add—and also going forward, when we have a new round and registries start applying for gTLDs, by then, they will be also allowed to apply for variant gTLDs because this process will be complete.

But then also we need to think. When they apply or associate those variants to their TLDs, would they afterwards be able to allocate them without waiting for a third round?

DONNA AUSTIN:

So I think there's a few things to unpack in what you said there, Hadia. So some of that we will cover when Ariel continues with the presentation. And I think there might be—there's a question about sequencing that I think is B4 which is later. So we're just trying to deal with one part of what you're asking. So if we could just focus on that and then, we can get to the other parts. So let's see where we get to. So Edmon, go ahead.

EDMON CHUNG:

Yeah, Edmon here. I guess, just briefly adding to what Hadia just said, I think, yeah, this is the process – I mean, we are going through the discussion of how to deal with the existing ones in future. And I think based on last week's discussion, [inaudible] application and then whenever the IDN variant TLD is activated, then that activation can happen at any time. It's not dependent on the round. I guess, that that is based on what we discussed last week. I think that that should be the logical flow.

But I put up my hand for something else. I think the chart here is very useful. And I just want to note for people that the self-identified variants, of course, they include blocked variants, they include things that may or may not be variants at this point. But I do want to note that the information was actually used in the last round. It was used both in the objections process as well as on the

string contention set. The contention set situation. And it's pretty clear that if the variants overlap with—if these identified variants overlap, they would be considered a contention set.

And so these are not entirely unused variants. They were used for some part of the process in the last round and we should understand that as well. So these were disclosed prior to the string objection process. So any string objection process could have objected to the variants and also the string contention process also took into consideration the self-identified variants. So the string contention process also took this into consideration already. I just wanted to note this for everyone.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Edmon. I think that's some really good information and to some extent, feeds into what Ariel is going to take us through next which is about the process. So it's good to know that some of the processes, the variants [inaudible] in some of the processes from 2012. We have Maxim and then I think, we want to get Ariel back to that rest of the presentation, Maxim?

MAXIM ALZOBA:

Maxim Alzoba for the transcript. Just a short clarification. We need to remember that all what happened during that last application window is now a historical data. We could refer to it, analyze it but it's not live. You cannot say, oh by the way, seven years ago or nine years ago we did this. Many applicants change their legal entities. TLDs change hands, etc. I'm not sure we should refer to it

as something existing. It's something which was applied as an information. That's it. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Maxim. It is one of the challenges that we're dealing with here is, we're trying to marry what's happened in the past with what we want to do in the future. And that's a little bit of a challenge for us, so hopefully we can find the best path forward. So we will let Ariel continue with her presentation and then we'll see where we get to. Please keep in mind that what we're talking about is existing IDN gTLD registry operators and how we manage the process that would allow them to apply for variants.

Notwithstanding that in the 2012 round, they did have self-identify variants which was helpful and as Edmon says it's been used in the 2012 processes. But we need to work out the relevance of that, what we decide to do in terms of processes moving forward. Ariel, back to you.

ARIEL LIANG:

Thanks very much, Donna and thank you for the discussions here. So moving on, let's just take a quick look at what were the IDN specific questions asked in the 2012 round. Before that, I wanted to read all these bullet points line by line but in the high-level, there are three main questions. The first question is question number 14 regarding the IDN string details. So basically, the applicant is asked to provide the A label, the meaning of the label, the language of the string, the script of the string and also all the codepoints contained in the U-label, according to the Unicode

form. So question 14, IDN String Details, that's one main question asked in the application round.

And then second main question is question 15 about the IDN table so the applicant is asked to upload the IDN table for the proposed registry and there's some specific requirement related to that IDN table and then also the applicant was asked to describe the process used to develop the IDN table and finally, in Question 15, the applicant was asked to list any variant according to its own IDN table to the applied-for gTLD string and, in fact, we do have a IDN table-related charter question in the later parts of our deliberation so this can be discussed later in detail.

And finally the third main question related to IDN is for the applicant to describe its efforts to ensure that there are no operational or rendering problems concerning the applied-for gTLD string and, if there are issues, what are the mitigatory steps for resolving those.

So these are the three main questions asked in the 2012 round related to IDN applications. So now I'd like to turn us over to Steve, who is a staff expert in terms of the 2012 round and many of you know that he has supported the SubPro PDP along with Emily who is also on the call today. So perhaps, Steve, you can take us through the detailed application process in the 2012 round?

STEVE CHAN:

Sure, thanks Ariel. This is Steve and I'll just say it's a bit terrifying to ever be called an expert on anything but, okay, I'm an old-timer

at ICANN. I did indeed support the program and also the SubPro PDP. So before I get started, the reason we want to go through the existing process, one, is we should not take for granted that everyone is familiar with the process as it took place in 2012 and why it's important to, I think, understand that process is because it's important context for understanding what might be necessary for an existing gTLD registry operator to allocate its variants.

So what would that process look like for allocating that variant? So what you're looking at right now is a process flow that was taken from the 2012 AGB which means, of course, that it will not take into account the changes that were recommended from SubPro. But nevertheless, at least from the staff and leadership's perspective we think it's still instructive to take a look at the overall process and the various aspects contained within.

So any number of these boxes in this process flow could lead to a long and detailed conversation and that is definitely not the intention for this high-level run-through here but it's rather about providing high-level context about the process so the EPDP teams knows better, I suppose, in the future where everything resides in the overall process. And so, in understanding the existing process, we need to consider which elements would apply for the variant of an existing gTLD and what I mean by that is would the entire process be relevant to a variant or would the majority of the process be relevant or perhaps would only a small portion of all of these steps be relevant? And then, even in that subset, what parts of the process would be relevant but perhaps modifications are needed and so you could look to the questions in our future under

Topic E of our charter that might indicate that some of these steps would be needed but they might look slightly different for variants.

With that brief context, I'm going to do a high-level overview and I know some of the folks on this call are familiar with the process. Jeff would have definitely been one of them but he's an apology for today. But nevertheless, for those also familiar with the process, please feel free to add additional clarity or correct as needed.

With that I'll start by pointing out the key at the bottom left, which I think is a really important part of this process flow, and it relates to the different phases of the program and the key is therefore color-coded for all the steps that are relevant in the process flow itself. The important takeaway and why I'm drawing attention to this is that some of these aspects would have applied to every applied-for gTLD whereas some parts would have only applied in certain cases.

So I want to start with the elements that apply to every application and so the steps in light blue are about submitting the application, so submitting a valid string, we talked about this. It would be utilizing RZ-LGR in algorithmic manner. The blue steps would also be about answering the application questions and then also submitting payment. I think all these blue steps are pretty straightforward but please stop me here if you have any questions, but, like I said, I think that part's pretty straightforward.

Moving on, so the next phase is in yellow and this is referred to as initial evaluation. So, again to reiterate, all applications would have gone through all of these steps. The three boxes on the left, these

are all about evaluating the applied-for string and then the three on the right are about the capabilities and plans for the applicant. Charter questions in Topic E, we'll look in particular at string similarity and I think we've also presumed that the RZ-LGR, there would be sort of a double-check I suppose contained within the DNS stability panel. So string similarity and DNS stability are on the left here of the six yellow boxes. So it may be worth considering whether all these evaluation elements would apply and, if so, whether or not they need to be modified, I guess, in particular for IDN variants.

So in the simple world the next step that an application would go through, they would pass through all of these elements of initial evaluation and move on to the section in light green. Ariel, if you don't mind going to the next page actually. Thank you very much.

And so that's called transition to delegation. It's at the very bottom right and within these steps, it's the contracting, it's pre-delegation testing, which is more or less to make sure that the applicant and future registry operator is ready to actually get their TLD delegated. Then, of course, the very last step as part of this process is delegating the string. So that is the very simple path and it would have applied to any successful application in the 2012 process.

I will pause again here to see if there's any questions about that. Obviously, like I said, every one of these boxes, there's quite a bit of detail we could go over but, again, this is just really high level and, again, context for us to consider which parts might apply or perhaps which parts do not apply for variants. And just trying to

quickly scan through any of the chat to see if anything came up but I don't think anything relevant to cover here. Okay.

So moving on and, sorry, Ariel, if you can go back to the previous slide real quick. Actually, sorry, I think we can stay here.

So now what I want to just cover quickly is the steps that would only apply in certain circumstances and so, in the tan, yellow, brown, I'm not exactly clear what color that is, so on the left-hand side of the chart, this refers to extended evaluation and this would only be applicable in the event that an applicant does not pass one or more elements of initial evaluation and they would have a second opportunity to pass the evaluation element that they did not pass previously. So it allows for the correction or clarification of issues but the scope would be the same as in initial evaluation so it's more or less the same thing as initial evaluation but a second chance to pass the element they did not pass the first time.

In the blue section in the middle, you have four areas which parties with standing can file an objection against the application. This is actually an area that is specifically called out in Topic E of this group's charter so we'll obviously cover that in detail when we go through that particular topic.

And then lastly in purple is what's called string contention resolution or, in other words, where you have two or more applications for the same or similar string and you can only delegate one of those strings. Again, this is actually also another topic in our charter, under Topic E. Again, this is extremely high level but it's potentially important context as you think about the

process that an application for a variant for an existing TLD could or should or have to go through.

As a tie-in to Part 3 of today's discussion, presumably the complexity of the process that would be needed to evaluate a variant could impact the application fee. So, in other words, if the process is very, very simple presumably the fee would be less but if applying for a variant and evaluating a variant would require more or less all of these steps then presumably the fee would have to reflect that complexity as well.

So with that I will stop there and again see if there's any questions.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Steve. So any questions for Steve? So what we're trying to highlight here is, depending on what process we decide existing gTLD IDN operators use to apply for their variants, what elements of the 2012 application process would still apply and so we thought that was pretty important to just have a sense of what the 2012 evaluation process looked like and it was interesting that Edmon said that the variants that were identified in the 2012 application were taken into account with some of these processes already but of course they were self-identified variants because there was no Root Zone LGR available back in 2012, so the variant possibilities likely are different now. So that's not potentially a complication but just another important data point.

Hadia, go ahead.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, this is Hadia for the record. So as you mentioned the Root Zone Label Generation Rules were not available back then. But my question just for assurance and clarification, none of the self-identified variants back then went through these blocks or, if they did go through some of the blocks, which blocks did they go through? Would it be the ones in light green?

DONNA AUSTIN: Steve, can you answer Hadia's question or perhaps we can, I don't know whether Edmon has his hand up because he knows the answer but I actually don't know that answer?

STEVE CHAN: Sure, I think so, yeah. I think I can probably answer that and Edmon can probably add something to the response as well.

So, as Hadia mentioned, the RZ-LGR did not exist at that time but, as Ariel mentioned, the IDN tables that the registry operator was going to leverage for the top-level domain, those need to be included and presumably the variants would have come from that table. I can't say for certain that that's the case but that was probably logically the case. But as Edmon mentioned earlier the variants would have been used in the string similarity evaluation and then also in the objections elements so they were involved in the process but they were not evaluated as such, if that distinction makes sense, I suppose. So there are parts of the blue boxes here on the screen and the purple boxes here but the variants that were self-identified were not evaluated. Like I said, I hope that distinction makes sense. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN: Yeah, right, because they couldn't actually go through the contracting and be delegated because there was a policy not to pursue variants.

Okay, so Edmon?

EDMON CHUNG: Edmon here. So just before I speak, for those who missed the chat, I just want to make sure and I'll try to do this at every session as I go forward but I mentioned this as well previously, so in general I'll be participating as someone interesting in IDNs and the policies. Unless I specifically say that I'm speaking as a Board liaison, please take my comments as contribution that way. There might come a time that I would bring the Board's views as a Board liaison but I will especially say that. I will try to make this particular part shorter into the future but at least highlight it the first time I speak at sessions.

So back to the topic, I think I put my hand up to respond a little bit to that but my answer is very similar to, in fact identical to, what Steve says. I think what I want to clarify is that the self-identified IDN variants were taken into consideration and involved in the process; however it is not, what's the right word, fully official or something so this group needs to still take into consideration the different steps and probably think about whether it's sufficient, what has been considered last round already given the situation and also maybe a study on – I think that was done but anyway – but how much difference the self-identified variants in terms of the

table of all the variants were there, something that was identified that was not in there, was there something that is the LGR now that's not in the self-identified, that would give us some information on whether additional processes needs still to be put in place, like even for the string similarity review, even for the string contention – well, the string contention's probably very difficult and I don't think that that is the case, I think part of the study already said that that's fine – but also for the objection process whether there were ones that were not identified by the self-identified variants but now included in the LGR that needs to be shown and whether further string objection needs to be run.

I think a number of things were taken into consideration but we would still need to go through each item and think through whether additional processes might be warranted, given now that we are kind of officially saying that the Root Zone LGR is the process and, based on that, this is what the set of variants are and this is how we're dealing with it.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Edmon. So there are some kind of complexities that we need to work through about how much of the process was done in 2012 and how relevant is that to whatever we decide the process should be moving forward. I guess in my mind from a very pragmatic perspective there's a few things that kind of come to mind for me and that is we know that we have X number of potential applicants that might want to apply for variants but we don't know for sure whether they would be interested in doing that but at best we're going to have X number of applicants. To Hadia's point I think that she brought up on the last call, could they

just apply for those now somehow and not need to go through a round?

But there's another question associated with that. If all existing IDN gTLD operators decide that they do want to apply for a variant, that's a whole team, well, not a whole team, but that's a team of people that ICANN has to put in place to do those evaluations so that's potentially a big item. And then set up evaluators and whatever. So they're the kinds of things that we need to think about when we develop a process and then some of these things that we work through in terms of the process, particularly with string similarity and some of those other things, would it be cleaner to make sure that there is an opportunity for existing IDN gTLDs to apply for their variants before there is a next round? Because if you can do it separate from a next round then you kind of minimize where that string similarity and potential objections might come in.

So it is a lot to kind of think about from a process perspective and not to lose sight of the fact there will be hopefully another gTLD round at some point in time. What's the implication of bumping up against that or doing this at a point after that? So this is not without a number of considerations that we need to take into account. Jerry, go ahead.

JERRY SEN:

Thank you, Donna. This is Jerry Sen for the record. I would just want to agree with Edmon about to cut some of the reviews and the distributor reviews and the applicant reviews that have not need to be repeatedly done since this is for the same registry and

for the strings. But I think Donna has just covered most things that I want to say that I think there should not be a complete application in the next round. There should be a simplified round. That's my opinion.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Jerry Sen. Okay, I'm not laughing because I think this is funny. I'm laughing because I think this is a lot to unpack. So where are we, Ariel, in terms of the presentation? I've lost sight of that.

ARIEL LANG: Thanks, Donna, so for Part 2-related information data we are done so if we'd like to move on in the presentation, the next part is regarding the fees-related information and that's to help address Part 3 of the charter question.

DONNA AUSTIN: Okay, Ariel, can we go back to the questions that you posed for this part and let's see if we can get a sense of where we think we are on—what kind of process do we think would be good for existing gTLD registry operators that are seeking to activate variants?

So based on the conversation we've had, does anyone have any views about, Jerry Sen just said it, a simplified application process? As a general concept, is that something that folks support? Are there specific application questions that would be contained within that? Would it be best to have a dedicated round

for existing registry operators to apply for their variant or is it something that could happen on an ad hoc basis? And what considerations do we have with what would be required to set that up?

So, Maxim, go ahead.

MAXIM ALZOBA:

Maxim Alzoba for the record. I think this might be seen as a workaround for the next round and in situations where the community doesn't see it in 10 years I'm not sure it will be recognized in the interests of community to have, because it's going to be seen as a preferential treatment, despite explanations that, no, it's not a big deal because anyway only those entities should be able to apply for those strings. But the words "apply for" means the application round and, if we insist that we want to launch some special application round, we might need to refer to recommendations of SubPro and, as I remember, there were no support for the idea of special, separate application rounds. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Interested to hear from others on Maxim's perspective. Edmon, go ahead.

EDMON CHANG:

I was wanting Steve to speak first but when he put down his hand I wanted to put down mine. I was just going to put down my hand but I guess I can speak first and Dennis and Steve can add to it.

I guess one of the things that we should think about is to really stop saying application. I know it's sort of an application but let's use the terminology like activation of the variants because, as we discussed last week, we have agreed, at least I think we've agreed, that it will be one application for the entire set and then there would be activations of any variants. I think that that clarification in terminology would save us a lot of time as we discuss these type of issues. That's a suggestion, I guess.

And in terms of activations of these IDN variant TLDs, I think it should be an ongoing process. Whether it is for the previous round or for future rounds, it should be an ongoing process whereby successful new IDN gTLD applicants could at any time that they see fit activate allocatable variants, right? At least in my mind that makes more sense. Yeah, and if we take that logic further, then we can consider in terms of fees as in, I guess, a cost-recovery basis which is generally the principle where we think about the new gTLD process and then when we talk about activation of these variant strings, well, what should be considered both in terms of the additional information, if any, to be provided; and then fees, if any, and how the principles for the calculations of those fees.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Edmon, and we will get to fees. Just on the distinction between—and I understand the sensitivities around applying for a gTLD and the understanding that has for some people. I think what we've got in the summary ... Sorry, Maxim. What we have in the summary is for registry operators seeking to activate allocatable variant labels.

The reality with 2012 is that that opportunity to seek to the variant label set hasn't been available yet, so that's part of what we're trying to do here.

Steve, something you wanted to add to this or can I go to Dennis and Michael first?

STEVE CHAN: Thanks, Donna. I prefer to just go after Dennis and Michael.

DONNA AUSTIN: Okay. So, Dennis and then Michael.

DENNIS TAN TAKANA: Thank you, Donna. I wanted to add a few points to this conversation. I think we're going in the right direction and there's good points made here. Just wanted to opine from an ... I'm one who has observed these IDN topics, variance or not, from the past almost ten years.

So, I think, in principle, I like simple versus complex processes. I think the discussion on the [inaudible], the terminology that we are going to use apply versus activate is important and might define how we see, how we allow for these variants to be activated. I'm saying activated, but delegated, into the root zone.

I think I observe and I note that ICANN, as an organization, already has many processes to test the technical competence of registry operators, not only in overall DNS services, but IDN specifically, and this is put to the test whenever a registry operator

requires a new IDN table for second-level registrations. But also from a change in backend service providers, the new backend service providers, go through the same technical test in order to determine the technical competence.

And there are specific questions as far as IDN services and this working group, I think working through the questions about, okay, so what do we need to ask a registry operator or backend in terms of how to establish competency in managing variance?

So if we add those into existing processes, then you can think about a single processes to allow the delegation of a variant TLD from an existing gTLD. Remember, we're in the context of existing registry operators, not new applications. Again, going back to the simple versus complex and how do we remember?

This is not new, right? Nobody is running any label, if you will, because these are expected to be ... The operator is entitled to those variants that the root zone LDR will calculate.

So, those are the points that I wanted to make. Simple versus complex. I think we already have ... ICANN Organization already has the processes, procedures in place in order to test, determine the technical competence of registry operators and we will need to add a few other questions about technical competence regarding managing variance. And yeah, this is not [inaudible]. We're talking about registry operators which would have the entitlement to apply for variant, allocatable variant labels. So, thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Dennis. To the extent we can keep it simple I think is important, but also keep in mind that in addition to the technical, there were other steps in that 2012 process that I think we still need to account for and that is if many of the existing gTLD operators are seeking a variant label set for their existing gTLD, how do we manage the string similarity? Is that still something that's relevant to the process? So that's something that's in the back of my mind. How do we ... Do we need to cover that off? Is it relevant? And how do we do that? So that's why we're taking the time to go through the process.

So, Michael, Steve, Maxim, and Sarmad. After Sarmad, I want to try to draw a line under this part of the discussion, so we've got a little bit of time to talk about fees as it relates to existing gTLD registry operators, so that we've got ... At least we've touched on that a little bit.

So, Michael, go ahead.

MICHAEL BAULAND:

Thanks. I'm a bit torn with this decision. While in general I agree that activation of a variant TLD should not be stuck to a future round and only be possible in a future round because that could take a lot of time and it's just an activation of a string that is more or less assigned to the registry, I see a problem with some TLDs that are in a disadvantaged, that their variant label which they consider to be a variant is actually not a variant because the respective generation panel just said that, no, those labels or those characters are not variant but they would still also like to

have that TLD as their own variant and they would be in a disadvantaged, they would have to wait until next round.

Talking about the example with .QUEBEC again. They have the TLD which is just ASCII and they would like to have the “variant” TLD with Quebec with an apostrophe which is not going to be a variant according to the root zone LGR but they could apply for it separately but they would then have to wait for it while others that, so to say, got lucky that their intended variant is in the root zone LGR, they can activate it earlier. So that’s just one reason why I’m torn with the decision whether this should be done out of rounds or not. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Michael. Steve, Maxim, and Sarmad.

STEVE CHAN:

Thanks, Donna. This is Steve from staff. The question about a simple versus a complex process, I think most folks would always choose the simple one if that’s possible. But I think that’s potentially a hard question to answer without having some context and the details about what needs to be done to be assured that adding the variant is being done in a safe and secure manner.

So, I guess what I want to do is draw a distinction between the elements that are in the application evaluation process between ... And I did mention this briefly but I don’t think I spent a whole lot of time on that is that some of the elements are in respect of the string, which is actually the vast majority of the boxes in the process are in respect to the string, versus the evaluation of the

applicant and their financial and technical ability which is really just a couple of boxes.

In my mind, I think that's a valuable distinction because the variant is a string, and therefore does that mean that all of the boxes that are looking at the string similarity, looking at potential objections to the variant, would those apply? Because again it's just yet another string.

On the same hand, a variant is intended to indicate "sameness", so is it a safe assumption to say that because the existing string was able to successfully make it to the evaluation process and therefore all the allocatable variants would also be okay? I don't know. But I just wanted to draw the point again that a large part of the evaluation was absolutely in respect to the string.

And the other distinction there is that what that allowed to do was the community and the public to also play a role in considering the string. So that would be the application comment. It would also be all the objection measures. Those are actually largely open to the public. So it's not instantly just for ICANN to say it's okay. It's also for the communities all to say this string is okay. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Steve. Maxim?

MAXIM ALZOBA: Actually, speaking about terminology, in the past, there is a somehow similar process called fast track for IDNs. I know it's something about—it's a bit different, but if we come to the

conclusion that there is a need to have a special process for already identified and approved variants, we could call it fast track IDN variants process. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN: Not a bad thought, Maxim. Sarmad?

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you, Donna. So, I was just doing a quick tally of the data we had shared with you in the context of variants which was self-identified versus variants which are generated through the root zone LGR. I did a count excluding Arabic script and the self-identified variant counts came to around 170-something versus the corresponding variant strings which are generated through the root zone LGR now go to about 1,000. So it's considerably larger.

If we include Arabic TLDs, and I'm including ccTLDs as well because for string similarity issues and all these others, of course that is ccTLDs are equally relevant even for gTLDs, the count of variant strings remains relatively low for self-identified, still around 200. But for the variants which are generated through the root zone LGR goes to about 20,000. So there's a considerable difference between the self-identified sets versus what are now I guess documented through root zone LGR as variant labels. I just wanted to share that data in the context of the current discussion. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Sarmad. I just fell off the chair with the idea that there's 20,000 possibilities out there. Okay. A useful data point. Okay. So, I do want to talk a little bit about ... I do want to have a bit of a discussion around phase, but I think what I'd like to do, if folks are amenable to this, I'd like to ask our staff support if we could put together a bit of a strawman about what would the process look like if we did a distinct round just for existing gTLDs to give them the opportunity to seek their variant label set. Steve has taken us through the various processes and maybe if we could put up a strawman on the understanding that it would be a discreet round only available for existing registry operators, how can we do that [achieving] a couple of things, taking in mind Dennis's let's try to keep it simple, Maxim's note about there could be parallels with the cc fast track. Maybe there is something in that. And a few of the other discussions.

I think one of the unknowns for is we don't know how many existing IDN gTLD operators are actually interested in having a variant label set, so that would be another interesting data point but it's a little bit hard to find it.

But I think perhaps the best way to try to get through this is let's try to do a strawman process for what we think it would look like and then we would share that with the group and come back.

I appreciate Dennis's idea about keeping it simple but I think there are a number of process steps in this that would be challenging and that may need some development as well, so there would be some new things we have to do.

And Edmon, I take your point about [inaudible] it around. We need to be careful about the terminology and I think we [trip up] quite a bit on different terminology and what that means to folks. So if we can find a way to call it something other than around, maybe a discreet opportunity for existing gTLD registry operators to set their variant label set. We'll be sensitive to that.

Is there any objection to us doing a bit of a strawman so we can see what a discreet process would look like? I think we've had a lot of good suggestions and ideas and thoughts during this call. I think the only way to wrap it up is try to do some kind of discreet strawman and see how we can ... All right, I don't think anyone is screaming that's a horrible idea, so we'll take that forward.

Just to finish off this conversation, I want to have a conversation about the fees. So, Ariel, if you can take us quickly through that, that would be great.

ARIEL LIANG:

We're going to talk about part three of the charter question briefly regarding associate fees. So based on last week's discussion, there appears to be different perspectives among the members regarding the fee question. We did hear some emphasis on the cost recovery or revenue neutral principle, but of course the discussion was just starting. Now we're going to present you some information for your consideration that's pertaining to the fee structure in the 2012 rounds and you can consider whether this information will be relevant or helpful for our deliberation of the fee question here.

As a refresher, the 2012 rounds, a fee structure composes of three main parts. The first part is the evaluation fees. That's the base fee, I guess, for the application. So per application, it's US dollars \$185,000 and that covers all required reviews in the initial evaluation, and in most cases, any required reviews and extended evaluation.

So, this fee is intended to ensure that the gTLD program is fully funded and revenue neutral, which means that it doesn't need to be subsidized by existing contributions from ICANN finding sources such as generic gTLD registries and registrars, [associate] TLD contributions, and RIR contributions. So that's an important principle that we should remember.

The second component of the fee structure is some additional fees that may be required in some cases and those are related to specialized process steps in a process such as the registry services review fee that will incur when an application needs to go through a registry service technical evaluation panel for extended review.

Also, the dispute resolution filing fee. That's related to filing a formal objection and any responses an applicant files to the objection. Also, advanced payment of cost and that's related to in the event of a formal rejection, it will be basically payable to applicable dispute resolution service provider.

And lastly, community priority evaluation fee that's related to community priority evaluation. So these are some additional fees that an applicant may pay for, so I would just want to list the dollar amount here, I won't go into detail, but applies in some cases.

The last component is ongoing fees while the gTLD is approved by ICANN. One of the sub-components of that is the fixed annual fee, which is \$25,000 per calendar year or \$6,250 per calendar quarter that's paid by the registry operator. And also transaction fee of \$1 each calendar year or \$0.25 per calendar quarter. That's applicable to any transaction but it won't apply unless more than 50,000 transactions have occurred during the calendar quarter.

So these are some of the fees from the 2012 rounds. I'll pause here. I see Maxim has his hand up.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Just before we go to Maxim, what I'd really like to do—we've only got five minutes left here. I want to have a discussion based on existing gTLD registry operators. They've already paid \$185,000 for the application, so they've been through this process. Whether folks think the principle should apply, that these fees that were associated with round two would still hold for existing gTLD registry operators that are looking to get their variant set ... Sorry, I don't have my headset, so I'm working from my laptop. Is that better, Hadia?

Okay. So, if we can just keep that in mind as we have the discussion. I think it's really about ... So the revenue neutral idea would apply and I think there's a question here for us whether applying for a variant set would incur additional costs or whether the costs would be consumed within the \$185,000 already paid. So I think that's probably a discussion we need to have in four minutes. Maxim, go ahead.

MAXIM ALZOBA: I think we need to add TMCH because they treat each string separately and there is a need to pay to get connected, etc. Not speaking about the difference in implementation because they will have to implement somehow all those variant rules on a technical level and legal level. Thanks.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Maxim. Any thoughts from folks about fees as they would relate to existing gTLD operators seeking to ... I'm trying to stay away from words that we don't want to use. Seeking their variant set for their existing IDN gTLD. Any initial thoughts on fees?

Okay. I see none. If we're working on the strawman proposal, what we could do is just have a little bit in there about some thoughts on the fee structure. Given that they've already paid the \$185,000, what other costs might be involved. Edmon?

EDMON CHUNG: Just in case people missed the chat, I'm not sure, Ariel, where the USD \$1 per calendar year comes from. I think you might want to check that. I guess it's ... From what I understand, it should be \$0.25 per domain year, but the minimum is calculated every quarter. It might be more than that if you don't meet the minimum. But it's certainly not a domain ... It's certainly not US \$1 per domain year.

DONNA AUSTIN:

Thanks, Edmon. We'll clean that up. Okay. I don't see any hands on the question of fees, so I think what we'll do in preparing a strawman, we will add a little bit on fees.

Okay. So, we're at time. Thanks, everybody, for your contribution today. These conversations are really hard when you're trying to essentially develop a process on the fly, so it is hard, but I think we've got some really good contributions that will help us develop a strawman and share it with the group.

Just a reminder that our call next week will be 24 hours later to accommodate the fact that ICANN Prep Week is next week, ICANN73 Prep Week.

And also just to flag that one of the things that we discussed as a leadership team and how can we get through our work a bit more efficiently and do we need extra time, one of the things that we discussed is whether it would be worthwhile every other meeting to have that two-hour meeting just to give us a little bit more time. So that may be something that we come back to in the near future because we got through that 90 minutes pretty quickly, or at least it seemed quickly to me. Maybe it's a bit [inaudible]. So that may be a request that we come back to you with at some future point.

Thanks, everybody. Appreciate everyone's patience in getting through these questions which are particularly difficult when you're trying to deal with process.

With that, Devan, I think we can end the recording.

DEVAN REED:

All right. Thank you all for joining. Once again, this meeting is adjourned. I'll disconnect the call and disconnect all remaining lines. Have a great rest of your day!

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]