

Minutes of the GNSO Council Meeting 15 January 2026

GNSO Council meeting on Thursday, 15 January 2026 at 05:00 UTC: <https://tinyurl.com/24b6dkjb>
21:00 Los Angeles (Wednesday); 00:00 Washington DC; 05:00 London; 06:00 Paris; 08:00 Moscow; 16:00 Melbourne

List of attendees:

Nominating Committee Appointee (NCA): – Non-Voting – Anne Aikman Scalese

Contracted Parties House

Registrar Stakeholder Group: Hong-Fu Meng, Ashley Heineman, Prudence Malinki

gTLD Registries Stakeholder Group: Nacho Amadoz, Samantha Demetriou, Jennifer Chung

Nominating Committee Appointee (NCA): Gaurav Vedi

Non-Contracted Parties House

Commercial Stakeholder Group (CSG): Lawrence Olawale-Roberts, Vivek Goyal, Osvaldo Novoa (apology, proxy to Susan Mohr), Damon Ashcraft, Susan Payne, Susan Mohr

Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group (NCSG): Farzaneh Badii, Bruna Martins dos Santos, Julf Helsingius, Taiwo Peter Akinremi, Tapani Tarvainen, Benjamin Akinmoyeje

Nominating Committee Appointee (NCA): Christian Dawson

GNSO Council Liaisons/Observers:

Justine Chew: ALAC Liaison

Sebastien Ducos: GNSO liaison to the GAC

Antonia Chu: ccNSO observer

Guests:

Manju Chen, Chair of SCCI

Sophie Hey GNSO Representative to the RoR CCG

ICANN Staff:

Mary Wong - Vice President, Strategic Policy Management (apology)

Steve Chan – Vice President, Policy Development Support & GNSO Relations

Julie Hedlund - Policy Development Support Director (GNSO) (apology)

Caitlin Tubergen - Policy Development Support Director (GNSO)

Saewon Lee - Policy Development Support Manager (GNSO) (apology)

Feodora Hamza - Policy Development Support Manager (GNSO)

John Emery - Policy Development Support Senior Specialist (GNSO)

Berry Cobb - Senior Program Manager, Policy Development Support (apology)

Andrew Chen - Policy Development Support Senior Specialist, Policy Development Support

Terri Agnew - Policy Operations Senior Specialist (GNSO)

Julie Bisland - Policy Operations Analyst (GNSO) (apology)

[Zoom Recording](#)

[Transcript](#)

Item 1: Administrative Matters

1.1 - Roll Call

1.2 - Updates to Statements of Interest

1.3 - Review / Amend Agenda

1.4 - Note the status of minutes for the previous Council meetings per the GNSO Operating Procedures: [Minutes](#) of the GNSO Council Meeting on 13 November 2025 were posted on 27 November 2025. [Minutes](#) of the GNSO Council Meeting on 11 December 2025 were posted on 05 January 2026.

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, updated her SOI to mention her updated Council positions.

Julf Helsingius, NCSG, stated that he became chair of Finnish ISOC Chapter.

Item 2: Opening Remarks / Review of Projects & Action List

2.1 - Review focus areas and provide updates on specific key themes / topics, to include review of [Projects List](#) and [Action Item List](#).

Susan Payne, GNSO Chair, noted that these should be reviewed prior to each meeting and there will be a Jeopardy quiz at the SPS.

Christian Dawson, NCA NCPH, mentioned that he was now the Latin Diacritics PDP liaison and that the PDP Initial Report is now out for [Public Comment](#).

Item 3: COUNCIL VOTE - First Policy Development Process (PDP) for DNS Abuse Mitigation Charter

3.1 - Presentation of [motion](#) (Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair)

3.2 - Council Discussion

3.3 - Council vote (voting threshold: an affirmative vote of more than one-third (1/3) of each House or more than two-thirds (2/3) of one House)

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, introduced the topic of PDP 1 and thanked the Charter drafting team. She discussed the changes to the Charter including the WG model moving from Representative + Open to the Representative model with a seat allocation for members, participants, and alternates. She also highlighted the updates to the [Charter](#) questions.

Vivek Goyal, BC, queried what can be expected to happen in terms of action against DNS Abuse after the PDP is complete.

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, responded that registrars would be required to do an associated domain check. PDP has not started work yet, but those are a part of the [Charter](#) questions. Council cannot preempt the outcomes of it.

Vivek Goyal, BC, asked if registrars would be required to address a malicious domain.

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, reiterated that this is preempting the PDP and asked Ashley to weigh in on the registrar point of view.

Farzaneh Badii, NCSG, mentioned that there is no problem with the change that Anne proposed, but this is a template and changing it at the last minute. Tell the liaison to consider this language as well in the HRIA, then we can later add language to the template to come to a compromise.

Lawrence Olawale-Roberts, BC, returned to Vivek's question for clarity, that this PDP is supposed to lead to outcomes and how those outcomes will be treated is sacrosanct to how much DNS Abuse will be impacted and reduced. Going ahead without having to put some safeguards to ensure ICANN compliance work. Cannot preempt the work of the PDP, but how will those outcomes be treated. On the Human Rights issue, there is still not consensus from the drafting team. Why are we still having changes on this? The drafting team worked around Human Rights Impact; it was of the view that the Human Rights Checklist would apply. The statement that we have that was crafted by staff with the issues report. Has not been extensively discussed. There will need to be a discussion with the constituency for changes to this particular language for Human Rights, there are lots of interpretations that are not in the best interest of the PDP for subjective language. Proposed removing it completely from the draft, and from the checklist to return to future amendments in future work. This should not be discussed having different resolutions passed for a working group to address this.

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, let Ashley address the first part and noted that removing the Human Rights section would be too late in the game at this point in time.

Ashley Heineman, RrSG, responding to Vivek, the action is not within the scope, registrars are already required to take action in the contract requirements. This is a requirement to do an associated domain check. The action is already there and covered in the RAA. She also agreed that HR should be covered on all PDPs going forward.

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, thanked Ashley and returned to the Human Rights question from Lawrence. She emphasized that the Council has already decided that the HRIA would be used from the LD PDP onwards.

Steve Chan, ICANN org, intervened to note that there is a HRIA template that can be used by working groups, which is essentially the implementation of the HRFOI and that point may not be apparent. What is actually used in the LD PDP is the implementation of the Work Stream 2 outcome, taking the HRIA template and customizing it for the specific work at the point of stable preliminary recommendations. That customized template is then used in the PDP for a holistic review of the recommendations against that impact assessment and the LD Charter has the same language as the DNS Abuse PDP 1 Charter.

Anne Aikman Scalese, NCA Non-Voting, noted that there was not a lateness to her suggestion. Her suggestion was in the google doc and there was not full consensus on the HR language in the charter. There may have been some confusion about the timeliness of her intervention about the framework of interpretation as that was sent long before and added to the document. She was happy to learn that the NCSG does not object to the amendment. It was previously said in accordance with the Framework of Interpretation for Human Rights. HR FOI is the governing document, it is up to the PDP which direction they go on this. Her concern is that the umbrella should always be the governing document of the HR FOI, which was in the google doc at one point then disappeared. She is happy with what the working group decides if they have a human rights expert on the HRIA or build off of what the LD PDP did. Ultimately it is important to refer to the governing document, because wherever there is a balancing of core values and Council does not want to say you have to use the checklist and can't go outside of it as everything should be done in accordance with the Board adopted FOI on human rights.

Farzaneh Badii, NCSG, cited Justine in the chat. This template was done by SCCI and in coordination with the in-house NCSG human rights experts. At that time SCCI came up with this template, discussed with

NCSG and worked with human rights experts who chaired the CCWG and we want to prevent relitigating things. If we want to re-litigate, it will have to go back through SCCI. NCSG would agree on the condition that this is not PDPs in the future based on this change.

Justine Chew, ALAC Liaison, expressed concern on behalf of ALAC with the progress of the PDP as they would like it to proceed ASAP. She expressed concern that any further changes proposed here might delay the process and that she would like to avoid that as much as possible. She suggested that, since it is difficult to amend boiler-plate text in a charter (an action which should probably go to the SCCI as a review process), for Council to amend the Charter just by making a reference to “the HR-FOI as adopted by the ICANN Board”, i.e. the text that Anne is proposing, by inserting it in another place rather than in boiler-plate text on human rights. It seems to her that no one is objecting to the insertion per se, just the placement of it. As such, we could proceed, using the LD PDP as precedent, make a record of that understanding and whoever will be appointed liaison for that PDP can reinforce this statement of Council. If the Council wants to revise the Charter for the next PDP it can do so after the fact.

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, thanked Justine for the constructive intervention. She reiterated that the focus today is for the WG to be convened and start the work as soon as possible. There is more context needed to amend boilerplate through SCCI as human rights will affect all PDPs going forward.

Anne Aikman Scalese, NCA Non-Voting, Anne is happy to have a reference added to a different part of the charter.

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, noted Justine’s suggestion to insert Anne’s proposition into as the last bullet point under “considerations.”

Anne Aikman Scalese, NCA Non-Voting, agreed.

Jennifer Chung, GNSO Vice-Chair, read the [resolved](#) clauses and moved to a vote.

Terri Agnew, ICANN org, moved to a roll call vote. She reminded the Council that Prudence Malinki has stepped down, so the vote for RrSG will be considered as absent.

All Councilors present voted in favor and the resolution passed.
[Vote Results](#).

Vivek Goyal, BC, gave a big thank you to Jen for herding cats through a small door in a short period of time.

Action Items:

- Staff to update the final bullet of the Other Considerations addressing Anne’s suggestion on list (COMPLETE)
- Staff to update the Charter and link it to the DNS Abuse page and update the draft email link to send out in the CfV (COMPLETE)
- The GNSO Council requests that the GNSO Secretariat publish the Call for Volunteers for Members, Participants, Alternates, Observers, and relevant liaisons per the membership structure within the PDP WG charter. (COMPLETE)

Item 4: COUNCIL VOTE - Council Guidance for the Implementation Review Team (IRT) on Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs) on Curative Rights

4.1 - Presentation of [motion](#) (Damon Ashcraft, GNSO Council Liaison to the IRT on IGO-INGO Curative Rights)

4.2 - Council Discussion

4.3 - Council vote (voting threshold: simple majority)

Damon Ashcraft, IPC, introduced the topic and gave background for the UDRP with respect to IGO's/INGO's as they are not able to litigate in courts, being "out of jurisdiction" unlike through arbitration. There was some IRT concern over the UDRP language, is this somehow different. After discussion, this was not believed to be the intent. This is not a disagreement agreement on the recommended policies. If you have an IGO/INGO that is a litigant to a UDRP any party can go to arbitration and harmonize the procedure. It makes the process simpler and makes it the same across all UDRPs. Personally, arbitration is expensive and complex, instead of a UDRP, it would be extremely expensive for IGOs/INGOs.

Farzaneh Badii, NCSG, asked for clarification from Damon on the process of URS and UDRP as opposed to curative rights or arbitration.

Damon Ashcraft, IPC, responded that UDRP rules say that there cannot be court action while UDRP action is proceeding. You would be in violation of the UDRP rules. This arbitration came about because IGOs/INGOs are not subject to the same jurisdiction as most litigants. It is lengthy, complicated, and expensive, and was not in anyone's intent to incentivize someone to use that over the UDRP. The intent is to have it the same as everyone else through the UDRP process.

Farzaneh Badii, NCSG, asked if the IRT believes that they can go to UDRP or the arbitration at the same time?

Damon Ashcraft, IPC, responded that they cannot go on at the same time. What the motion does is if you file a UDRP and either parties or both parties decide it is not working for them, they instead want arbitration, they can file that and go straight to arbitration. The concern personally is that if you don't have that, when a party looks at a domain name dispute they are going to say they don't want the UDRP because they could get stuck in the process and could not go to arbitration. That would put both litigants in a very expensive and complex procedure and would hurt individuals without a lot of money.

Peter Akinremi, GNSO Vice-Chair, asked if this aligns with the consensus policy of the GNSO Council.

Damon Ashcraft, IPC, there was language in the PDP that mentioned arbitration at the end of the dispute. This would typically be when one litigant is not happy with the outcome. Forgetting that you can go to court/arbitration at any time during the UDRP and should not be a process that locks people in. That is what people were thinking and why it was put there as the UDRP is not supposed to be a rigid process that locks people in as it is a non-binding resolution process.

Peter Akinremi, GNSO Vice-Chair, queried if this interpretation aligned with the consensus policy. The NCSG discussed if this is actually aligned with the intent, so if it aligns that this is correctly interpreted.

Damon Ashcraft, IPC, responded that it absolutely does. If they wanted to have something that was different in the PDP it would have expressly said so. Because it is a wild card to have it play the other way. He went on to read the [resolved](#) clauses.

Terri Agnew, ICANN org, moved to a vote.

All Councilors present voted in favor of the motion.

[Vote Results](#)

Farzaneh Badii, NCSG, noted that there are a lot of motions coming at the NCSG. Doing things efficiently needs to come up with a way to discuss things first to come up with a motion to get clarification beforehand. What are the Councilor's responsibilities for the motions before the Council at meetings.

Susan Payne, GNSO Chair, noted that this was circulated to list long prior to the deadline and it could be discussed at SPS if needed. There were only two votes and motions this meeting, so there has been ample time to ask questions or clarification on the mailing list. It is unusual that we don't have a discussion on one meeting and then a vote on the next, but it is by no means unprecedented and on simple things, it ought to be done efficiently as that is our job as Council.

Action Items:

- The GNSO Council requests that its liaison to the IGO-INGO Curative Rights IRT provide this information to the implementation staff and IRT. [COMPLETED]

Item 5: COUNCIL DISCUSSION - Standing Committee on Continuous Improvement (SCCI) Policy Status Report (PSR) Final Report

5.1 - Introduction of Topic (Manju Chen, Chair of SCCI)

5.2 - Council Discussion

5.3 - Next Steps

Peter Akinremi, GNSO Vice-Chair, introduced the topic on the Standing Committee on Continuous Improvement (SCCI) and its work on the policy status report that was developed and shared by GDS Staff. The SCCI has produced a brief report highlighting three recommendations with Council for review. He handed the floor to Manju Chen, SCCI Chair.

Manju Chen, SCCI Chair, shared the following [slides](#) and highlighted the work of the SCCI and its three recommendations on slide 5.

Justine Chew, commented that the educational materials being proposed to differentiate between the GNSO processes will be very helpful and will hopefully be as simple to read and digest as possible. She stated the reason being is that she constantly has to explain to people in her group the difference between a PDP and an EPDP and so, educational materials would be helpful for that purpose.

Manju Chen, SCCI Chair, thanked Justine and noted this was an extensive topic during SCCI and one of the reasons why educational materials are so important.

Anne Aikman Scalese, NCA Non-Voting, thanked Manju for the efficient SCCI meetings that there is more work to be done, but this process was succinct, effective, conclusive, and consensus-based. She

queried about the consensus policy implementation framework, continuous improvement issues and the Board readiness work, where those stand.

Manju Chen, SCCI Chair, SCCI will pick up meetings again and it is for the Council to decide whether they want to pass Board readiness issues to the SCCI.

Peter Akinremi, GNSO Vice-Chair, thanked Manju for her excellent work. He reiterated the educational materials the committee put forward. While the recommendation is brief it touches on a key part of understanding and improving the GNSO process.

Item 6: Discussion on Upcoming Board-Council Dialogue on SSAD Recommendations

6.1 - Introduction of Topic (Susan Payne, GNSO Chair)

6.2 - Council Discussion

6.3 - Next Steps

Susan Payne, GNSO Chair, introduced the topic and shared the following [slides](#). She highlighted her email circulated after the December Council meeting where the Council voted to accept the Standing Committee's report as a helpful input into the upcoming dialogue between the ICANN Board and GNSO Council. The Standing Committee's recommendation for the SSAD recommendations is included in Recommendation 5 from the Findings Report - specifically, after discussing the various options, the Standing Committee is recommending the supplemental recommendations process similar to the path the Council undertook for the non-adopted SubPro recommendations. In other words, the Standing Committee recommends that the Council encourage the Board to consider non-adopting the 18 SSAD recommendations to allow the Council to modify the SSAD recommendations via the supplemental recommendations process in order to incorporate important lessons learned from the RDRS pilot with an eye toward the Board adopting the modified recommendations. The Standing Committee recommends "keeping" 6 of the 18 recommendations and modifying 12 recommendations; however, even for the 6 recommendations marked as "keep", the Standing Committee believes that very small enhancements can be added to the recommendations to enhance the SSAD for both requestors and registrars. These six recommendations marked as "keep" are also designated as low level of effort to add the proposed edits and enhancements.

Susan Payne, GNSO Chair, continued with the [slides](#) highlighting the meaning of Board non-adoption and what it is not. She emphasized that this is an opportunity for dialogue between the Board and Council and this was done during the SubPro recommendations and the Council worked on developing supplemental recommendations, where changes can be made to address Board concerns. Then those supplemental recommendations would come to Council for a vote and return to the Board. She anticipated doing something similar here in this particular case to kick off a process to align what our policy recommendations aim to achieve with a slightly less complex system than the original PDP came up with.

Farzaneh Badii, NCSG, referenced the RDRS pilot, which was approved for another two years. Why not use the standing committee to gather information through the SC through the next 6 months or a year and then do a small team plus to shape the supplemental recommendations. In this small team plus is that part of the Council and other community members can join.

Susan Payne, GNSO Chair, how Council structures this is how we decide. SubPro did convene a Small Team Plus, but this does not have to be done in this particular case. There was some additional

representation at times when supplemental recommendations for SubPro were done. It had good engagement and worked well.

Anne Aikman Scalese, NCA Non-Voting, mentioned how the SubPro process was effective to resolve Board disputes. In the RDRS report there are many suggestions to modify recommendations and that would be useful for a Small Team Plus to talk and get agreement prior to Board non-adoption. She also mentioned that clarifying statements were also used during SubPro, but this is best for an SPS discussion.

Susan Payne, GNSO Chair, clarifying statements were used and this is an interactive process. This is similar to batches of recommendations in the case where the Board identifies ones of concern and Council works through them, and sometimes that concern falls away after discussion. Some had a clarifying statement, and some required more work, but Council will have more time to discuss next week.

Susan Payne, GNSO Chair, cited Sam in the chat to have the Standing committee make suggestions as they have done in a detailed piece of work going through each SSAD recommendation and flagged issues for consideration and what a reasonable path forward would be.

Action Items:

- Continue discussion at SPS in Barcelona [COMPLETED]

Item 7: Update of Cross-Community Group on Review of Reviews 7.1 - Introduction of Topic (Sophie Hey and Osvaldo Novoa, GNSO Reps to the RoR CCG)

7.2 - Council Discussion

7.3 - Next Steps

Sophie Hey, GNSO Rep to the RoR CCG, shared the following [slides](#). She gave a follow-up summary as follows: The Review of Reviews work is currently in Phase 2 – developing proposals to present to the community at ICANN 85 in Mumbai. Currently the group is looking at 5 different ‘buckets’ or reviews. Exploring possible cadence, scope and the possible outputs.

- Bucket A – some version of accountability and transparency review, subgroup currently exploring whether Strategic Plan and Annual Report could be base documents. Expect the small group to suggest that cadence, scope and possible outputs will be considered further by the CCG.
- Buckets B and C – group has discussed this over last 2 weeks, Continuous Improvement Program and Structural Review.
- Bucket D – some kind of standing review of reviews.
- Bucket E – ad hoc review for issues not otherwise covered by the other reviews.

She encouraged individuals and groups to share input with the RoR CCG. For instance, you are still able to sign up as an Observer to the RoR CCG [here](#). Many Observers have been sharing their input on RoR calls. You can also provide input, as an individual or SG/C via the mailing list: inputonreviews@icann.org.

The kind of input that would be useful to the CCG would include Council thoughts and reasoning on:

- What should be subject to review moving forward
- What should not be subject to review moving forward

- Gaps in the thinking of the CCG
- Purpose of reviews program as a whole

Anne Aikman Scalese, NCA Non-Voting, raised questions on the current discussions. She asked whether the strategic plan would be reviewed against the small group. She noted the strategic plan 2027-2031 contains over 30 strategic initiatives over a 5-year period, then reviewing accomplishments poses a logistics issue because those strategic initiatives are not precisely calendared and they go over a period of five years. Has the small group talked about these difficulties?

Sophie Hey, GNSO Rep to the RoR CCG, answered that this has been considered to try to triangulate the strategic plan, operating plan, and annual report. We have to recognize the function of the Board is to make sure the org and the CEO have fulfilled this and the community has been consulted and engaged in the process. This is more about the how because looking at the overall planning cycle for the strategic plan and seeing the community involvement, the question is have we followed through and done this in a transparent manner. It is not redoing the work, just looking at the how and the logistics have been considered.

Anne Aikman Scalese, NCA Non-Voting, noted that some members expressed that the strategic plan is a top-down document and that Org would not be changing how the strategic plan is developed. She wondered what the small group discussed in terms of whether the way the strategic plan was developed would be affected by a new review mechanism.

Sophie Hey, GNSO Rep to the RoR CCG, replied that it has been discussed and the strategic plan is an element of this. There is an engaged group and the strategic plan is something that generally doesn't get the most attention as it is often dense. Recognizing that there will need to be some changes to encourage people to realize the full cycle and opportunities to engage across that five-year cycle.

Anne Aikman Scalese, NCA Non-Voting, asked about the continuous improvement program and the necessity for the process to be followed by a particular SO or AC. There will be a public comment process, but when it comes to individual SO/AC recommendations after they have gone through continuous improvement, then we shouldn't be trying to override the org's own determinations about its recommendations for internal improvement. There is an important distinction between the review process of an SO/AC for continuous improvement and a review of whether or not we like their internal recommendations.

Sophie Hey, GNSO Rep to the RoR CCG, this was something discussed this week in terms of scope. At the moment they were landing on continuous improvement that would be a review of the process itself and not attempting to substitute for SO/AC decisions.

Item 8: Any other business

8.1 - Update on ICANN85 planning and Draft GNSO Schedule

Terri Agnew, ICANN org, shared a [draft schedule](#) of ICANN85 and reminded everyone to [register](#).

8.2 - Final SPS Reminder

Terri Agnew, ICANN org, gave final SPS reminders including homework for the Councilors and a reminder of activity dates.

8.3 - Latin Diacritics PDP Liaison

Action Items:

- GNSO Council is to read the email sent on 13 January in preparation for the SPS.

Meeting Adjourned: 07:00 UTC