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JULIE BISLAND:

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Continuous Improvements call taking place on Wednesday, 15 April 2026. For today's call, we have apologies from Peter Akinremi, and Gaurav VEDI will be joining late today. Statements of interest must be kept up to date. Does anyone have any updates to share? If so, please raise your hand or speak up now.

All right, seeing no hands. If assistance is needed updating your statement of interest, please email the GNSO Secretariat. All documentation and information can be found on the wiki space. Recordings will be posted on the public wiki space shortly after the end of the call. Please remember to state your name before speaking. And as a reminder, participation in ICANN, including this session, is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy, and the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct. And with that, I will turn it back over to you, Manju. Thank you.

MANJU CHEN:

Thank you, Julie. Hello, everyone. The weather today in Taipei is very weird, so I was a bit under the weather. I just took a pill for allergy, so I might sound a bit incoherent. If that happens, I will try to get back to normal, but for now, it should be good. Let's move to the next slide.

A recap of the last meeting, which was two or three weeks ago because we took a break for two weeks. Basically, in the last meeting, we agreed on the proposed approach and overall methodology that we use to

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develop the indicators, and we did send out the indicators to the team on the mailing list for you to review. Thank you to all of you who have reviewed and made comments. Today's meeting is mainly to review those comments and discuss what we think about them. Most of the actions, as I have already explained, have been finished from the last meeting too. Let's go to the next slide.

Before we start to review the comments, we thought it is good for us to be reminded again of the timeline for this year and what we are going to do. For now, we are reviewing the indicators, and per the guidance from the CIP, we are to develop three to five indicators per criteria. Once we have agreed on the indicators, it is for all of you to bring them back to your stakeholder groups or constituencies for them to review those indicators and criteria and confirm they are happy with them too. Then we will move on to the next step, which is planning and developing the assessment plan. After that, we will get the data we want and then find areas for improvement by the end of this year.

Next slide, please. Before we start reviewing the comments individually or overall, there are some things we discovered from the comments on the documents. We felt it would be good for us to have a level setting of what we are doing here and what we are expected to keep in mind when we are reviewing the indicators so we are not overachieving or not meeting the goal.

These are the ideas we wanted to share and have agreed upon by the team. First of all, we are now reviewing the indicators because basically for last year and the year before, before the SAI was even established, the CCOICI already developed the criteria. The SAI has also reviewed the

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criteria and agreed that they will be the criteria we use to develop the indicators. We are mindful that after we review the whole set of indicators, we might feel the need to go back and delete some criteria because apparently we were overachieving already when we were developing them. We do not need that many. Some of them might be redundant because as some have noted, we have several repeating indicators, probably due to repeating criteria. We can definitely go back in the future if we feel the need to see if we want to delete or revise the criteria, but for this week and the weeks after, we are reviewing the indicators only.

We apologize for having the criteria upfront in the indicators document. That may be confusing for people because that is where people start reading, but keep in mind that we are only reviewing the indicators now. We also agreed at our meeting in Mumbai and last week that we are including a mixture of process, procedure, and governance-based lists, and data that is measurable and quantifiable. There will be indicators where the answer will just be a yes or no. For example, some indicators might say we have an existing process to do this, and the answer to that will be yes, and that will mark the finish of the indicator or the answer to it.

There are some indicators that are suggesting we have one or more procedures in place, or that a certain number of constituencies are happy with or feeling like the GNSO process is efficient. Those kind of measurable, quantifiable indicators also exist. It will be a mixture, and we have received guidance from the CIP team that this is an ideal way of developing indicators. Keep in mind that not all indicators have to be quantifiable or measurable. Sometimes it is just a yes or no. We also

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discussed this during our last meeting. We are not expecting to score ten out of ten for every indicator because this is supposed to be a self-assessment and continuous improvement work. The main purpose is to find out where we have to improve in the future by assessing these indicators.

We are not developing answers now. We are developing questions where we need to collect data. That is something we need to keep in mind when we are reviewing the indicators. Sometimes we see indicators and we feel like it is not enough, or it sounds too vague or too easy. We have to be mindful that there is data that sounds nice but is probably not possible or feasible to collect. We must consider how to collect them and if they will be useful. Try to be pragmatic when reviewing the indicators. After we finalize the indicators, we are going to collect data which will eventually help us to determine areas in greatest need of improvement. That is the whole purpose of developing indicators here. Again, we are not trying to provide answers yet. It has been hard for the leadership team and staff to decide how we do the indicators because at first, we were already envisioning the answers. We are trying to go back to the idea that these are questions we are going to answer in the future and collect data for. I am pausing here to see if there are any responses, feedback, or reflections. Anne, please.

ANNE AIKMAN-SCALESE: Thanks, Manju. It is Anne. I appreciate you explaining the ground rules and the construct of how it is envisioned that the CIP will work. I do think that some of the comments that have come in and questions that have been raised go to the possibility that folks are a bit concerned that

the responses obtained based on these indicators might be somewhat academic in nature and not terribly useful. It almost sounds to me like a lot of the questions being raised are asking if we are really going to get the information we need by asking, by measuring these indicators. The answers seem to come from the survey, which is the end goal. How exactly is that survey going to work? How do we know that information is really going to be useful?

MANJU CHEN:

Thank you, Anne. We will be developing the survey together as a team once we are finalized with the indicators. By that time, we will definitely be able to make sure the survey works and get the data we wanted. It will be after we finalize the indicators. I definitely agree with your observations. It has been a difficult task to try to create these indicators. Staff is doing an amazing job. All the feedback we saw on the documents was very useful too. Just keep in mind that we struggled through this as a leadership team, and it is worth sharing because in the end, we circle back to what we are supposed to do instead of what we are imagining the answers are.

Let's move to the next slide. Here we are going into the comments. These are the themes we have observed from the comments on the document. We can always go to the documents if people feel it is necessary to go back to a specific section. For now, it will be useful for us to start with the themes. If you recognize something you spotted when you were reviewing the indicators and you feel it is easier for us to review it on the document, we can do that. Let's start with the themes on the slides. The first one is the time period and frequency.

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There are some indicators that indicate something will happen regularly or timely. There are comments saying we feel it should be more precise. Do we want to see an example on the document to see what this refers to?

Let's see an example and we can discuss from there. You can access the document in the chat too. For example, the indicators here say the GNSO Council regularly engages with the SOs, ACs, SGs, and Cs. Some feel like regularly is too vague. What do we mean by regularly? Do we mean bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually? Do we need to be more specific? I think this is a point for us to discuss. Do we think regularly is sufficient? Again, I sound like a broken record, but these are not the answers. These are the questions. For these questions, the GNSO Council meets regularly or engages regularly. The answers we can provide are that the Council has open meetings in every ICANN meeting where it has an open mic where everyone can come and comment on Council business, or the Council meets with other SOs and ACs in ICANN meetings. These will be the data and answers we provide according to these indicators. That is why the question itself will sound a bit vague at first, but that is what is behind it when we are designing the indicators.

I will stop here to see if anybody has any reactions to this. Since the person who left the comments is not here, maybe we can come back to this when he is here. Gaurav has arrived. Hi, Gaurav. We are now reviewing your comments on this indicator. I am sorry to put you on the spot immediately once you join the call, but do you mind sharing your thoughts behind your comments on this one?

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GAURAV VEDI: Thanks, Manju. This is Gaurav for the record. My comments are very generic in nature. It was not clear to me while reading the indicator how frequently the GNSO Council should engage with the respective bodies. It would be helpful if you can specify a periodic frequency, whether it will be a weekly meeting, bi-weekly, monthly, or a quarterly meeting. That was the intent behind this and if this is exactly captured by the indicator itself. I hope that clarifies.

MANJU CHEN: Yes, thank you very much. Lawrence, please.

LAWRENCE OLAWALE-ROBERTS: Thank you, Manju. I wanted us to put into context the fact that the Council itself meets at best once every month. Like you had said earlier, there is the opportunity for engagement with the community at every ICANN public meeting, which at best will be about three times in a year. I do not have any objection to the way it is currently worded, but where we want to put some specificity to the timing, we should be aware that the Council does not meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, but just once a month.

MANJU CHEN: Thank you, Lawrence. Jen, please.

JENNIFER CHUNG: Thanks, Manju. I have a question here. The indicator and the criteria are for us to be able to get to a question where we gather data, and then

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the assessment of whether it has been fulfilled happens afterward. If we are too specific here about what regularly means, then we do not have the same flexibility. The assessment of whether it meets this actually depends on the answers we get back. If we are making a determination now what is reasonable, then it becomes very fixed at the indicator level. I hope you understand. If not, I will try to explain myself further.

MANJU CHEN:

Thank you, Jen. I totally understand because that was the struggle we had when we were developing the indicators. When you see the indicators, you kind of already think about the answers. That is why when we see regularly, we wonder what it means. These are supposed to be questions where we provide answers. For this specific indicator, the answers we will have will probably be three. First, the Council engages with other ACs like the GAC in every ICANN meeting. Second, the Council has an open meeting every ICANN meeting where it has an open mic and everyone can express their opinion. According to these answers, then we have an assessment of whether meeting in every ICANN meeting is enough. If we think there is room for improvement, we can suggest it should be monthly. This is the whole process we will go through. That is why the indicator really has to be not too specific because that would be limiting our ability to answer and our ability to improve once we find the answers. I hope I make sense. Anne, please.

ANNE AIKMAN-SCALESE:

Thanks, Manju. The comments from others raise some questions in my mind. When we say that the answers to this question about regularly

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would be the following, it is as if we are saying we have framed the indicator because we know the answers that we want to supply. I do not think that is what you said at the beginning was the way that we would be developing indicators. We would not develop them based on what we think the answers will be. Part of me wants to say to delete the word regularly and put the GNSO Council engages effectively with SOs, ACs, SGs, and Cs. You ask a question if the GNSO Council engages effectively. Frankly, for example, the answers given about the open mic have not been very effective at all. People are not showing up at the open mic from the GAC or the SSAC to say something to the GNSO Council. That is not how they communicate with us now. I think regularly does not actually measure a lot. I would favor having it as engages effectively, although I know that part of indicator three goes to that question.

MANJU CHEN:

Thank you. I think Ajith has a similar line of qualitative suggestions. Please, Ajith.

AJITH FRANCIS:

Building off what Anne is saying, I think rereading this, there are two things we are trying to achieve in the indicators. One is having a quantitative measure in terms of regularity and frequency. The second part is the qualitative piece, which asks if it is sufficient or effective. This is the delicate balance we have been doing with staff as we are trying to balance the qualitative with the quantitative. I think indicator three in that sense is that test of the qualitative measures of the quantitative indicators that we are putting in place in indicators one and two. In one,

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we say we meet a certain number of times and there is a mechanism to seek input. Then the third one asks if this is sufficient or effective. That is where indicator three becomes the defining threshold for the qualitative piece of the assessment. That is how I am perceiving this. This has been an interesting exercise in trying to thread the needle of how to define these indicators in terms of what we want to test and what results we would like to see.

MANJU CHEN:

Thank you, Ajith. From what I am getting from everyone's comments, I am suggesting two solutions here. One is we scratch regularly and change it to effectively. The second is we add one more indicator. We keep the first indicator where we provide quantifiable data, and then we add indicator two that says the GNSO Council effectively engages with SOs, ACs, SGs, and Cs. For that, we can provide qualitative data. What do you think about just changing it or adding one? Thomas, thank you for saving me. Let's add one. We will have a second indicator after the first indicator which is basically the same as changing regularly to effectively. Thank you all for this discussion. We will go ahead and change similar indicators too where we have similar comments. We will circulate back the revised version for the team to review. Thomas, are you saying that we are changing the at least one mechanism to seek input to change it to effectively engages with SOs, ACs, SGs, and Cs? I think it could work, but I will have to depend on staff to do the word tweaking. Steve, please.

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STEVE CHAN: Thanks, Manju. This is Steve from staff. Instead of adding a new indicator, I wonder if for indicator one you could say the GNSO Council regularly and effectively engages with SOs, ACs, and SGs and Cs. This gives a little bit more economy of indicators but captures the same sentiment. Then maybe for indicator two, you could say it has at least one effective mechanism to seek input. That way you add the same qualitative indicator to that quantitative measure. I think that makes sense.

MANJU CHEN: Thank you, Steve. Thomas?

THOMAS RICKERT: I am not sure whether I care so much about the mechanism that is deployed. I see in the chat that reference is made to the term mechanism used in indicator two. I think what we are looking for is a method of whatever shape or form to seek input from the community. If we added to that an opportunity for effective exchange so that it is not just unilateral but bilateral, that could do the trick. I do not have any issue with adding a distinct indicator for that. I think the mechanism to seek input is meant for the Council to take in external opinions and respond to them, which is a good way of covering efficient engagement.

MANJU CHEN: Thank you very much, Thomas. I feel like there are opinions that mechanisms should be identified, and that would be good quantitative data too. We can say something like the Council has one or more

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mechanisms to effectively seek input. This word tweaking would keep the indicator both quantitative and qualitative. I actually think it does not hurt to have two separate indicators, one for regularly and one for effectively, because we can have three to five anyway. I will let Steve go first.

STEVE CHAN:

Thanks, Manju. I just had a chance to reconsider what I had said. I am thinking that the way it is structured now actually makes quite some sense after hearing what Thomas said. For instance, indicator one could be about the frequency and whether or not that frequency is adequate. Then the second could be about the mechanism and whether or not that mechanism is actually effective. You have the frequency in one and the effectiveness of the mechanism in two. Maybe we accomplish what you are saying within the existing structure. You do not add effectively to one because that is about frequency, and the second is more about effectiveness. That is maybe a way forward.

MANJU CHEN:

Thank you, Steve. Anne, please.

ANNE AIKMAN-SCALESE:

I want to go back to what was first suggested. I think you are going to get better data and more distinct answers. I think you leave indicator one with regularly. You have a new indicator two that addresses the question of effectively, which is what Thomas was talking about. It is still important to identify the mechanisms as a separate question. There is

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the general qualitative question of effectively, and then indicator two should become indicator three and should talk about the mechanisms for seeking input. If you combine too many characteristics in one indicator, it is going to be blurry and harder to measure. I would favor going back to Manju's original suggestion of adding an indicator for effectively as indicator two and making the current indicator two into indicator three about mechanisms. We think of things like the GAC giving a communique and the GNSO Council developing a formal response. We can defer a motion so that councilors can talk with their stakeholder groups before a vote. These mechanisms are important to identify separately and pose a separate question as to the effectiveness of said mechanisms. Those two questions need to be separate.

MANJU CHEN:

Thank you very much. I personally do not think it will hurt to have four indicators under one criteria because we can have three to five anyway. I think I just repeated what I said before. Ajith, please.

AJITH FRANCIS:

I agree with that and to echo Anne, I think the idea is not to get rid of indicator two focusing on the mechanism, but adding the qualitative piece to the mechanisms. If we go down the approach of having four or five indicators, do we also want to add something like the GNSO communicates and engages with its constituents sufficiently? Do you want to add another qualifier there based on the conversation we just had on indicators one and two?

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MANJU CHEN:

My initial reaction is that there are other indicators that have what you were saying about sufficiency because this is only one indicator. I feel like there must have been other indicators that suggest something about sufficiently engaging. That is my impression. We are looking at these three only now, so it is not the whole picture of all the indicators. We can definitely go back and see if there are indicators that collect qualitative data rather than quantitative data. Since this is a theme, all the similar indicators will be changed according to what we agree today, and then we can come back next week to see if that is what we imagined. Does that sound good? Thank you. One other thing we discovered is that people have opinions on the wording of at least one. They feel like we are asking for too little. It should be one or more. I personally do not have any opinion on this as they are basically the same. One or more sounds good to me too, but I will open the floor. For indicators that say something has at least one, we just change every instance of at least one to one or more. Steve, your hand is up.

STEVE CHAN:

Sorry, Manju. It was actually for the last point. I was trying to provide one minor tweak. I was thinking that for the effectively question, instead of making that indicator two, you actually make it indicator three. Then you are asking about the effectively element in respect to both the cadence and the mechanism. You are looking at both parameters of the two previous indicators. In summary, make the effectively indicator indicator three.

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MANJU CHEN: I think it is easier if we do the change and come back because it is hard to imagine it without seeing it in text. We can come back to it later. Anne, please.

ANNE AIKMAN-SCALESE: I think that is probably a good suggestion, Steve. I will let the leadership and staff figure it out. I wanted to talk about the at least one versus one or more. I start thinking about what the survey question says. If it is just a yes or no, like the Council has at least one mechanism, you just say yes in the survey, but you have not actually identified any mechanisms. In most cases, we have more than one mechanism. You would think that in the survey you want to identify what some of those are and how effective they are. That is why I suggested one or more because usually the answer is more than one. It should lead to survey questions that talk about naming those mechanisms and looking into their effectiveness. That is why I would say one or more rather than at least one. In a survey, it should not just be a single yes or no answer without being fleshed out.

MANJU CHEN: Thank you, Anne. When we are designing the indicators, we are not expecting the answer to be yes or no. This is where we will list out the mechanisms that are in place. If that gives the impression of a yes or no answer, I agree it would be better if we change it to one or more. It gives more of a nudge to list out all the mechanisms that are in place. If everybody agrees, we can change every indicator that has at least one to one or more. Ajith, please.

AJITH FRANCIS: Building on what Anne was saying, something that went off as a light bulb for me in conversations with staff was that not every indicator needs to be part of the survey. Some of the quantitative ones, in terms of frequency, may not necessarily need to be in the survey because that could be ascertained by staff or whoever is conducting the assessment to evaluate that based on non-survey data gathering. That makes it extremely important to have those qualitative pieces so that we can use them in the survey. Not everything needs to be in the survey, which is where the qualitative pieces become extremely important.

MANJU CHEN: Yes, thank you, Ajith. As we have said in previous slides, we are combining different sets and different essences of measurements. Some will be qualitative and some will be quantitative. Quantitative data will be collected mostly from a survey, but not all indicators will collect data from a survey. I am opening five seconds for people to strongly object to changing from at least one to one or more. If nobody objects, we will change it for all indicators. Five, four, three, two, one. Cool. We will go ahead and change at least one to one or more to give a stronger impression that people have to list out the existing mechanisms rather than just answering yes or no. Thank you very much. I think this theme of objections to certain statement indicators was already addressed in our previous discussions where we are using the same methodology but a mixture of different natures of indicators. Some will be quantitative and measurable and some will be yes or no. If no one has a strong opinion they want to share about this, being mindful of time, we can go

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to the GNSO and GNSO Council. I do not see anyone with a strong opinion on this. I wonder if we can do GNSO Council versus GNSO in eight minutes. Can we see an example of this GNSO Council and GNSO? While staff is changing to the document, I wanted to share my observations. For the indicators, we really have to review them case by case. Sometimes it fits more as the GNSO Council and sometimes it fits more as the GNSO. For example, on the screen, for criteria one, we are saying GNSO Council instead of GNSO. There are comments about whether this should be the GNSO Council or the GNSO. Personally, I think it makes more sense to be GNSO Council, but I am opening the floor. This will be the start of the discussion because we are eight minutes from the end of the call. If anyone has anything they want to share now, the floor is yours. Anne, please.

ANNE AIKMAN-SCALESE: Thank you, Manju. I wonder if you have to ask the question in relation to both entities. I can see why on principle three we could just frame everything in terms of Council, but I could also see how you could have another principle that framed everything in terms of the GNSO generally. Within one principle, are we asking consistently about the Council, and should you in another principle ask consistently about the GNSO other than the Council? We probably should not mix the two in one principle.

MANJU CHEN: Thank you. I think that is definitely a case-by-case scenario where for some criteria it fits more as the GNSO Council and for some it fits more

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as the GNSO. When I was reviewing some indicators, I suggested some should be GNSO instead of Council, and others should be Council instead of GNSO. I encourage everyone to carefully read them and see what you think. We can go one by one to reach an agreement. Maybe for the next meeting we can go through the document and agree on each one. During this week, please go to the document and leave comments so we can effectively review them in next week's meeting. Does that sound good for everyone? Thank you. Let's go back to the slides because I do not have time to go through the rest of the document. We will have a meeting next week. I was anticipating a next meeting because I thought we would have a lively discussion, which we had. Anne, please.

ANNE AIKMAN-SCALESE: Thanks, Manju. That sounds good. Everybody should think about the Council versus the GNSO. Mainly I raised my hand because I wanted to thank the leadership and staff for those initial slides explaining the principles and ground rules, and the way you were able to isolate the five or six themes. I think it is very helpful the way you structured the conversation for today. I very much appreciate it.

MANJU CHEN: Thank you so much. All credit goes to staff. They were the ones doing the fabulous work, and my Vice Chair is fabulous too. The next meeting will be next week at the same time. In the meantime, we will go ahead and change what we agreed upon today and circulate the updated document. After that, you can look very carefully at each instance of

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Council and GNSO to see if you agree with the wording, and we can come back next week to start with that. I do not think the longer timeline is as important for now. This will be where we end. Is there any AOB? If not, thank you very much again. I really enjoyed today's discussion. We will have an enjoyable discussion next week as well. Hopefully, we will have more progress next week. It is always good to have opinions shared. Thank you very much. I will see you next week. Bye-bye.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**