

10 February 2022

Samantha Demetriou  
Chair, gTLD Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG)

Dear Samantha,

Thank you for the [letter dated 20 December 2021](#) to the ICANN Board. In addition to our discussion with the Contracted Party House and all other parts of the community during ICANN72, we understand that some of these issues have also been discussed with ICANN org during your regular calls.

The Board acknowledges and shares the concern regarding the time it takes to move from policy and review recommendations to actual full implementation. We recognize that the current dialogue on implementation and prioritization addresses a very complex challenge, which we are to tackle together. As we are committed to a bottom-up decision-making approach in the development of policies and review recommendations, implementation can come with challenges: following Board acceptance of these recommendations, implementation is often not straightforward, but requires further exploration on how these policies and review recommendations can actually be implemented in practice, which requires further explanation and interpretation by the community. This is not recognized in the letter, and the Board does not share a characterization that could be understood as this is simply because of failure at the level of the organization and Board. The Board and organization are careful not to assume the responsibilities of the community and hence work hand in hand with the community to make this step from recommendation to implementation in practice.

With respect to the specific progress on the projects mentioned in the letter, the Board asked the organization to provide an up-to-date record, as to make sure there is a clear record on where we are, and what the next steps are to be taken in this, by the organization hand in hand with the community and the Board.

While respecting the various roles and responsibilities assigned in the Bylaws to the community, Org, and Board, we need to continue to find our way forward together to address the challenges that affect the efficiency of our current decision-making processes, including, for example, ambiguous, incomplete, or unclear policy recommendations, the relitigation of policy issues during implementation, and the use of the review process to create recommendations that should properly be addressed by policy development. In our view, these and other aspects of the policy development, review processes and implementation mechanisms contribute to extended time periods needed for implementation of adopted policies and recommendations. Moving towards Operational Design Phases for implementation of recommendations that are complex and for which implementation is not straightforward is one of the steps recently made to address this gap between policy recommendation and interpretation thereof for implementation in practice.

In addition, we have agreed across ICANN that a prioritization mechanism is needed to organize both policy development, review recommendations and implementation work, as one of the key steps in improvement by better prioritization of resources available for implementation. We are hopeful that the Prioritization Framework now in pilot will turn out to be a significant enabler to accelerate work

on community-prioritized projects. This said, the Board also recognizes that the Prioritization Framework is but one key element in addressing the broader challenge. As a tool, the Prioritization Framework could also be susceptible to the same kinds of pressures described above.

The Board and org have engaged or reached out to the community on several areas, including:

- Key topic suggested by the Board to the SO/AC leaders for Board-Constituency dialogue during ICANN73:
  - “What are your key priorities for ICANN work in 2022, how do these priorities help achieve ICANN’s common objectives as expressed in the FY 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, and how do you see Community, Board and org moving forward together on a way to achieve these? And if any, what suggestions would you have to enhance ICANN’s effectiveness and efficiency with regards to the process of implementation after adoption of a PDP or Review recommendations?”
- [Thought paper](#) from the organization to the GNSO Council on evolving consensus policy. The GNSO Council reached out for further dialogue, and we are looking forward to see progress on this;
- The work undertaken on the ATRT3 recommendations, including communication on the holistic review (see [letter](#) from OEC to implementation shepherds);
- [Publication](#) of the Operational Design Assessment (ODA) on SSAD.

The Board encourages all to continue the constructive dialogue on this topic that is now taking place, both in public sessions with the Board and other parts of the community, regular calls with the organization, and the many other channels of communication available to address these shared concerns. For all topics concerning the work of the GNSO, the Board is looking forward to further engagements with the GNSO.

Best regards,



Maarten Botterman  
Chair, ICANN Board of Directors