3 October 2013

Dear Chuck,

Fadi asked me to respond to your letter dated 30 August 2013. As you are a long and active participant in ICANN's multi-stakeholder community, we must thank you for your continued valued contributions. We acknowledge the importance and value of your participation as a former Chair of the GNSO. We also understand that you write this letter as a representative of your company, Verisign.

We can agree that ICANN's multi-stakeholder process does not guarantee that all parties, including those contracted by ICANN to provide registry and registrar services (even one as significant as Verisign), will be happy with every outcome. ICANN's multi-stakeholder process works because of two key elements: vigorous stakeholder engagement and robust accountability mechanisms. Any individual party's dissatisfaction with a particular outcome is not indicative of a failure of ICANN's multi-stakeholder process or accountability mechanisms.

Your letter makes vague and unsupported accusations about ICANN not operating as a multi-stakeholder, accountable organization. It appears to rely exclusively on examples in which your company would have preferred a different result. It is not surprising that you would take positions in the letter that are consistent with the outcomes being sought by your company. But in light of your personal involvement with ICANN over many years, I have to assume that your own views on these issues are at least more nuanced.

Public Comment

ICANN's Board and Staff recognize the tremendous value of public comment and input – they are a fundamental informational collection component of the multi-stakeholder process.

From policy development through policy implementation, ICANN strives to consistently collect, process and consider ALL comments that are received. Staff strives to consider every comment that is submitted and evaluate the merits of all arguments for consideration by the Board. It is unfortunate that there cannot be unanimous agreement on every aspect of every decision – that is simply not possible in every instance - but the record of our work on the implementation of new gTLD policies and other matters over the years clearly shows that decisions are thoughtful and consider many points of view.

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In fact, Public Comments and input were, are or will be employed in each of the examples cited in your letter.

Accountability

The mechanisms through which ICANN achieves accountability and transparency are built into every level of its organization and mandate – beginning with its Bylaws, detailed in its Accountability and Transparency Frameworks and Principles (adopted by ICANN's Board in 2008) and annually reinforced in its Strategic and Operational Plan.

As you know, parties aggrieved by ICANN decisions may also seek relief by submitting a complaint with the Ombudsman, filing a request for reconsideration, and/or pursuing an Independent Review. Information on Reconsideration & Independent Review can be found here.

Furthermore, improving ICANN's accountability and transparency is an ongoing priority of our organization's regular Organizational Reviews. In addition, ICANN undergoes community reviews as required by the Affirmation of Commitments, executed with the U.S. Department of Commerce. This webpage provides information on the AoC reviews: http://www.icann.org/en/news/in-focus/accountability.

Verisign's dissatisfaction with the outcomes of certain matters decided by the ICANN community is not evidence of a failure of ICANN's multi-stakeholder processes or its myriad of accountability mechanisms. To the extent Verisign feels aggrieved by any ICANN decisions, it may make use of the robust accountability mechanisms noted above. In addition, to the extent that Verisign is unhappy with the new gTLD registry agreement, it is free not to sign.

Security

Your accusation that ICANN is prioritizing the New gTLD Program over security is inaccurate and, frankly, reckless. From the beginning, we have made it clear that ICANN will not allow new gTLDs to operate if to do so would pose an unacceptable risk to the security and stability of the DNS. Prior to the Beijing meeting, Fadi said the following during a New gTLD webinar:

> *Nothing will trump the gTLD process, nothing, but the SSR layer. The SSR layer is paramount. It is our number one responsibility to the Internet community. Nothing will be done that jeopardizes the security and stability of the Internet, period.*

At any time if we as a community do not believe that all relevant security and stability matters have been addressed, if we do not believe that's the case, the program freezes, period.

There is too much riding on the DNS. Hundreds of billions of dollars of commerce. Some may say livelihoods. We will not jeopardize it, not on my watch, not during my administration.

To the dismay of many applicants, we have recently delayed the launch of new gTLDs as a result of an identified security risk. On 31 January 2013, the ICANN security team received from SSAC the draft SAC 057, "SSAC Advisory on Internal Name Certificates." SAC 057 recommended that the ICANN Security Team develop and execute a risk management plan to address the internal name certificates issue. ICANN then started discussing the issue with the community including through the SSR sessions organized in Beijing and Durban.

Based on discussions with the community, the need to conduct a study to analyze the name collision issue in more depth was identified. This study was undertaken by Interisle. ICANN staff developed and sought public comment on a proposal to mitigate name collision risks based on the findings of the report. ICANN remains fully committed to engage with the community in defining the best way to address the potential impacts of name collisions.

Strategy panels

As previously announced, the ICANN Strategy Panels are advisory in nature and in no way displace the traditional consensus building process. The panels were inspired by bottom-up community input and will channel all views, guidance and advice produced into the standard community and Board processes that guide ICANN's activities.

Interested community members were encouraged to volunteer for the panels, which will operate in a manner consistent with ICANN's commitment to transparency and accountability. The community will be kept apprised of the panels' work, which will inform consideration of ICANN's strategy and operating plans.

ICANN Labs

The need for ICANN Labs and the Digital Engagement Project emanated from the Outreach Community group, a broad and participatory community group focused on outreach and engagement. At the Beijing meeting the group requested greater focus and effort on digital engagement tools that could improve the relevancy and accessibility of information on www.icann.org and to provide venues and vehicles for potential members to engage with the ICANN community without attending meetings.

Prior to the Durban meeting, ICANN staff and the consultancy hired to help develop the project conducted 50 one-on-one interviews with community members, both veterans and newcomers. The interviews not only introduced the project but discussed the issues the individuals faced as newcomers and asked for suggestions to improve ICANN's digital presence. Furthermore, during Durban, staff briefed the SO/AC chairs about the project and also presented the project to ALAC and the GNSO Council, asking for people to volunteer and participate via the ICANN Labs website.

In addition staff also assembled an Advisory Group. The group was convened by asking the SO/AC chairs to circulate a general invitation email to their members. This same open invitation was also posted on the GNSO web page (http://gnso.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-22aug13-en.htm). To date, 28 people responded to this call and have joined the group, with wide representation from different geographies and stakeholder groups (the complete list can be found on the community wiki, https://community.icann.org/display/engagement/Advisory+Group+Members).

As for engaging the general public, on September 4th, staff held a public webinar, attended by 47 people (including yourself, Chuck), describing the project, why it was started, the methodology, roadmap and how they could participate. Since July 30th, we've also posted 18 blog posts describing the who, what, where and why of ICANN Labs.

As of August 18, 2013, and due to the high level of outreach and transparency, 525 people had signed up on ICANN Labs to participate and 57 members have volunteered to provide extra support to different project efforts (in addition to the advisory group participants).

Thank you again for your years of active participation within ICANN. I urge you to re-assume your role as a leader within the ICANN community. It's time to lock arms, move on and tend to the real business at hand.

Cyrus Namazi
Vice President
Domain Name Services
Generic Domains Division