
ICANN68 | Virtual Policy Forum – Joint AFRALO-AfrICANN Meeting
Tuesday, June 23, 2020 – 11:00 to 12:30 MYT

CLAUDIA RUIZ:

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all. Welcome to day two of our At-Large session of the ICANN 68 virtual policy forum on Tuesday the 23rd of June at 03:00 UTC for the joint AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting.

My name is Claudia Ruiz from At-Large staff, and I am the remote participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and follows the ICANN expected standards of behavior. We will not be doing a roll call during ICANN 68 but we'll note attendance for all of the sessions. During this session, questions or comments will be submitted via chat and will be read aloud if submitted in English using the proper form. As we've noted in the chat, we will read the questions and comments aloud during the time set by the chair or moderator for this session. If you would like to ask your questions or comment verbally, please raise your hand. When called upon, kindly unmute your microphones and take the floor. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English.

Please note this session includes interpretation in French and Spanish. To hear the interpretation, you will need to download the interpretation application. More information and details on this event and schedule and the instructions are in the chat.

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We have also posted all details on the At-Large ICANN 68 Wiki page. The links are posted in the chat. A kind reminder to please speak clearly and at a reasonable speed to allow for accurate interpretation, and again, to state your name each time you take the floor.

Thank you very much, and with that, I will hand the floor over to you, Seun. Thank you very much.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks very much. Good morning from Nigeria. Good afternoon, good evening to everyone in part of the world. My name is Seun Ojedjeji. I'm the chair of AFRALO and here to welcome us to the second virtual meeting, especially to our AFRALO-AfrICANN session. This session is one that we always do at every ICANN meeting. We ensure to always hold this session to discuss matters of concern and the outcome of it [usually results in a] statement which we eventually share with the respective part of the community, most importantly the board of ICANN.

before I continue, let me formally recognize the presence of some of the participants, the vice chair of the board, the board members who are from Africa, the CEO, and also of course other board members who are also present on this call, regional staff headed by Pierre, general staff for GSE, the ICANN staff, ALAC chair, and colleagues from AFRALO and the African community.

I welcome you all and I thank you for actually making it today to attend this call. The agenda has been circulated, and as you see on the

screen, that is what we're going to be working with this morning or this day, and I look forward to having a very good discussion with us all on this call, and from myself and on behalf of AFRALO, once again I welcome you to this call.

Without wasting much time, I think I would then proceed to hand it over to the chair of ALAC to give an opening remark. Maureen, you have the floor.

MAUREEN HILYARD:

I just wanted to say, first of all, thank you to Seun for his warm welcome. Good afternoon from the Cook Islands. It is 5:00 PM here, Abdeldjalil. I noticed he said it's 4:00 AM. I really do appreciate that so many members of AFRALO have committed themselves to the session, especially when I know that the timing is more APRALO friendly and may not be the same for everyone else who's here.

It's always a pleasure to be invited and to be part of the AFRALO meeting. Just to put it into some context too, within the APRALO region itself, there's actually a ten-hour difference between—for example within the leadership, a ten-hour difference between Lianna Galstyan in Armenia and myself in the Cook Islands. So when we're trying to even try to get a meeting just amongst our leadership team, it's quite a challenge. But I truly appreciate your indulgence.

One of the things that I feel is so commendable is that AFRALO takes the time to get together to address an end user issue as a region and to discuss it more formally within the context of the ICANN meeting.

And at the end of it, to have something to present to ICANN Org or the board that is a coordinated view from the members of your region.

I also appreciate that with regards to the submission that you're actually looking at today, that an earlier submission was made from all the RALO chairs on a similar topic. But at the same time, I believe that presenting the view that reinforces what the grass roots are concerned about in relation to participation is really commendable and it's a way in which you as a RALO can help ICANN first of all to understand how communities feel about and are dealing with the difficulties that they're experiencing, especially in this pandemic but in any other similar situation and on all the influences that may impact on your participation.

I think that what we have to do within ALAC and with the RALOs is it is timely that we come to look outside of probably what we've become used to, and to look at creating what is going to be the new normal for what is to be for us in the future. And it may be a little bit different to what we may be focusing on at the moment. But that's for future discussions, and I'm really looking forward to listening to the continuing discussion that you are all going to have on this matter anyway. And I certainly don't want to take up too much more time when you have other, more important guests. One of them is on screen at the moment, of course, waiting to speak to you. But I really do hope that you have a productive discussion during this session and an informative and enjoyable time during the remaining ICANN program, especially our At-Large sessions and the ICANN plenaries

which I hope we'll see many of you, as we have already, attending and taking part. So thank you very much, and enjoy your session.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks a lot, Maureen. Thanks for that remark, and we also thank you for your leadership as ALAC chair and also for the support that you've been offering to AFRALO during your leadership.

I would now like to move to the guest speakers and we'll be starting with Göran Marby. Göran is the ICANN president and CEO.

GÖRAN MARBY:

Thank you, Seun, and thank you, Maureen. To have you call me an important person, I feel flattered. Thank you very much.

It's starting to be a little bit of a tradition that I'm invited to your meetings, and I'm always looking forward to it. I think I've done this more or less since I started at ICANN, but first of all, I'd like to say I'm pleased to see that so many of you are actually participating at this call. I know that there are many other ICANN 68 sessions. And for the record, it's quarter 8:15 in the evening here back in LA, so it's not a bad time for me. The fact that I see that you're all over in different time zones shows the enthusiasm and the dedication of the African community within ICANN, and I'm grateful for that.

I read your statement, enhancing the resilience of the ICANN community in the face of calamities. And I note that the concerns you raised relate to the lack of adequate infrastructure in developing

countries. Electric infrastructure, Internet bandwidth, Internet data, costs, volunteer fatigue among other things, all of which can result in a reduction in effective participation in ICANN activities during the current COVID-19 pandemic. I also know that some of those issues were before the COVID-19 pandemic as well.

We are trying, in ICANN, to explore sort of the best tools and means to achieve robust remote participation. And I'm not saying that whatever we do sorts things out, but for instance, I'm happy that during this meeting, we're launching a new real-time interpretation tool, the Congress Rental Network app, and I hope you're using it. This major enhancement was offered during ICANN 67. I would say a small step for mankind but a big step for ICANN Org.

You might be aware that we are concerned as well about the community's ability to come into and hold those important discussions. We started a while back holding SO and AC virtual roundtables. We had the first one in May, I think, and what we do during those meetings—and Maureen is a part of them—is to discuss what your communities' leaders see as a strategy for mitigating some of the effects of this pandemic and the return to sort of face-to-face ICANN meetings again.

Based on the feedback received—and I want to complement both your paper and also what Maureen said, I don't like the word “new normal” or anything, but we need to develop a plan for how to get back to face-to-face meetings. But we probably will see a sort of phased approach for ICANN meetings.

And what we need to sort of sort out is how do we handle the in-between from this is where we are, the sort of phase zero, and phase three or four is actually coming back to the full-time full ICANN meetings. How do we do that the best way, and how do we make sure that we don't leave anyone behind during those phases?

Your input, your paper came in very—I don't know if you knew about it, but it came in right at the point of the discussions. For us, it's about—ICANN Org and the board in its essence is there to support you and the community. So it's really the community drives this discussion, because if you feel that your voice is not heard because it doesn't work, that's something that we have to act upon, but it really has to come from you. It's community interaction, community support, interactions within the board, org and the community, and also actually the outreach.

So as a result of the first meeting, what I can confirm is that we'll develop guidelines for virtual ICANN meetings which will be based on a sort of framework that ensure community participation, interaction, ensure SO and AC structures have sufficient support, support outreach needs as required by the community.

And the word “outreach” here is important because you're all sort of an example of it, because outreach is not only that we try to get new members coming into the ICANN community, it's also by creating those cross-structures that is needed within ICANN where different parts of the ICANN community comes together, because that's part of our outreach.

Maintain engagement of all you guys, I have to admit, and I think I sort of alluded to that in my welcoming speech as well, that I'm so impressed that you haven't missed a beat. Regardless of all the problems, all the things that are occurring, the ICANN community—and ICANN essentially hasn't missed a beat. And that's quite amazing, actually.

But we also need to identify and support community networking opportunities, provide enhanced capacity development opportunities, and what can we do during those phases to deliver an even better, enhanced virtual meeting experience.

So we invite you participate in the plenary on the topic of ICANN and COVID-19, advancing policy work in the current environment, which is the last day of ICANN 68. And as I mentioned before, the issues you highlight in your statement will feed very nicely into this discussion. I think I will stop there to see if there's any questions or anything, but really thankful for your commitment into ICANN, and really thankful for inviting me into this meeting. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks a lot, Göran. And yeah, we're very happy for your continuous support for our region as well in the various aspects. I think, yes, if there's any quick question to Göran—do we have any hand up? Of course, they can be—I hope Göran is staying a few more minutes so if we see any question, we could pass those to him.

I would then move to the next speaker, which is the ICANN board vice chair, León Sanchez. León has been quite a good friend of AFRALO. He always make sure to attend AFRALO calls. I don't know how he does it, but he does attend all the calls, most of the calls. And I understand that he also tried to attend other RALOs' calls. It's been amazing working with him, and we really are glad to have him on this particular call. León, over to you.

LEÓN SANCHEZ:

Thank you very much, Seun. Thank you very much, AFRALO colleagues. As always, it is a pleasure to be with you in this joint AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting. As Seun has highlighted, I tried to attend as many AFRALO calls as possible, and of course, I try not to miss the joint AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting at every ICANN public meeting.

I think there's little that I can add to what Göran has said. I would like to thank you all for the efforts that you have been undergoing and taking while facing these trying times and challenging times during this pandemic. If you might remember, I asked many in the ALAC list, in the At-Large list, to please share the challenges that you were facing when we last met in the virtual meeting for Cancun, because I was aware that being from Latin America is not really that different from being in Africa, and we face common challenges, common problems and my interest when I asked you to kindly share these challenges and difficulties that you were facing in attending the meetings are reflected in this statement that you are now discussing and that you're now about to discuss.

As Göran stated, I took these concerns to Org and some members of the board, and Org was fast in taking care and beginning hands-on to try to support the community in better ways. As Göran stated, this is something that needs to come from the community. I believe that there is already an ongoing discussion on this topic and as Göran also said, we will have a plenary session on ICANN and COVID-19 on the last day of this policy forum. So it would be great if you could participate in that session, of course, and share this statement that you are about to discuss now.

I will continue to follow these events as they evolve. You know that I have a personal commitment to the AFRALO region, to the At-Large community, and we are a team. We're in this together. So I again have very little to add to what Göran said. What I can assure is that I will continue to follow this personally and follow the discussions with the community with much interest, and we'll try to contribute in the best way possible so that we can together find ways that can help Org better support our community and of course try to tackle the different challenges that we are facing as a result of this pandemic.

I truly hope that the phased approach that Org has put on the table for the community to discuss comes to a good end. I truly hope that we are able to soon meet again face-to-face. Unfortunately, I don't think this will be possible before we have an effective vaccine and an effective treatment for the illness of COVID-19.

So we can but hope for the best, prepare for the worst as we usually do, and of course, contribute to the discussions that need to take

place in the community. And I would like to thank you again all for your efforts. I would like to commend Org, Göran and his team, for the job that they're doing in trying to better support our community into fostering this discussion that needs to take place, and of course, again, I remain at a click away from you. So if you have any messages, any questions, concerns that you would like to raise directly with me, you know where to find me. I am always open and I promise to follow up, reply to any e-mails that you send me.

So Seun, thank you again for having me here, and I will continue to be in the meeting following the discussions with authentically and with interest to see how this statement evolves. Thank you again, Seun.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks a lot, León. Thanks for those remarks, and as usual, we really appreciate your participation and your interest in AFRALO and this region entirely. We are lucky, we have two board members from Africa who are actually attending this call as well. We have Mandla and Ihab. I'm going to ask them to also speak to us as well. But in the meantime, if there's any question or comment to the previous speakers, please put it in the chat or raise your hand if you'd like to take the floor as well. I will then hand it over to Mandla to make a remark.

MANDLA MSIMANG:

Thank you, Seun. Good morning, everyone. It's 5:00 AM in Joburg, so not too unfair. Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I think I'll start off trying my not so great French. [inaudible].

Now, back to much safer English. 2020 has been a very interesting year. And Seun, as the speakers before me have mentioned, it's put a lot of pressure on us to try to find ways to participate virtually in the ICANN activities. And given that we're technology people from the technology community, you would think that this would be easy. But secure—and no matter how secure and stable and reliable the access to the Internet is, we can't take it for granted, especially in our region.

The problems that I think Göran had mentioned, the problems of COVID, it just brings to the fore historical problems that we've had around issues like water and sanitation that are needed to keep the virus at bay, healthcare systems that need to be used to treat the people who are infected with the virus, and lack of connectivity, obviously, to enable people like me who have children to connect to learning.

So it's no surprise that AFRALO members would be having difficulty connecting as well. I myself have experienced some of the effects of power cuts. I think the board members would remember when I could not connect because we had this load sharing in South Africa which is these two hours prior announced power cuts which then affect the mobile system which means you can't have network connectivity, which means you can't participate effectively. So I understand that. And in some areas, you might have trouble downloading large documents that enable us to—and we need that in order to participate in the public processes.

These are the unanticipated challenges of participating which we need to take into account to give life to the ICANN multi-stakeholder model. But on a broader level as ICANN, we understand that, and we need to make sure that, in line with our mission of ensuring the Internet is stable, secure, accessible, that this happens on the ground level for actual membership and for the communities, rather.

But these challenges aside—and I know the statement addresses them, so I'm looking forward to the discussion on that—I'm delighted that AFRALO is able to convene this meeting today to discuss these pressing issues. I think I saw in the group that there were almost 100 participants, and that's not bad, especially given the time difference issues. So I'd like to hear what the community is saying about these things.

I won't take much more, except to thank you for your warm welcome so far and to encourage any AFRALO members to reach out, even between these meetings, to exchange ideas, to exchange challenges, as well as successes, because I think there's also some successes on how to get around some of these issues so that we can facilitate the improved participation of the community members in ICANN-related activities. So I look forward to participating, Seun, and thank you for inviting me to give a short statement.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks a lot, Mandla, and of course, thanks also for the intro in French. It sounds French, actually, even though I don't understand French. But at least it sounds French. So I think it's good, and I can see

from those who were also following the language confirming that your French is actually good, not as bad as you thought. Thanks a lot for that intervention, and we look forward to continue engagement with you, and of course, wish you the best as you continue your role on the board.

I'll leave it now to Ihab. Ihab, you have the floor.

IHAB OSMAN:

Bonjour, good morning. Thank you, Seun. I appreciate the invitation and joining AFRALO. We live in interesting times, and 2020 is proving to be an interesting year, I think especially for us in the Africa region.

I consider myself to be a true African in terms of traveling the continent and seeing the continent up close and personal. During my work in building telecom and mobile networks on the continent, I was lucky enough to be able to travel to 42 of the African countries. And when I say travel, I don't mean parachuting into the capital and staying in the fancy five-star hotel and attend a conference and then leave. No, I mean getting in a car, traveling in the rural and the countryside, and go to the places where connectivity, telecom services and Internet are absolutely the most needed probably in the world, and where they can make the biggest impact in lives.

And it is that experience of working with connectivity and seeing all the connectivity issues on the continent that really was one of the key drivers for me to join the ICANN board, because I believe ICANN can play material and meaningful role in bringing the Internet and

connectivity to the young population in the Africa region that probably needs connectivity more than any other group in the world to bridge the digital divide, to work on the diversity issues that we have in this world.

One of the things that I'd promise the AFRALO members and all the ICANN community members from the Africa region, that Mandla and I will be a very strong voice for you on the board to push for Africa, issues impacting the Africa region.

I will give you an example. One I see now essentially for the whole year 2020, of course, if it wasn't for COVID, we wouldn't have had any of the three big ICANN gatherings on the continent and nothing is scheduled for '21 and '22 as well. And as someone from the Africa region, I am absolutely not happy with that. So we'll push Göran very hard to make sure that there is more attention given to Africa, given all the travel restrictions, given a lot of the visa issues that we face often from the Africa continent when we have to travel to Europe or North America to attend ICANN gatherings.

So we really need to have, I think, Africa more present in the global ICANN gatherings, and this is one of the areas I promise you we'll be very vocal on on the ICANN board. And just in general, to make sure the Africa region is top of mind when it comes to ICANN activities and ICANN programs to benefit and to support members and the Africa region at large.

Thank you again for this invitation, and I hope that we will soon be able to meet face-to-face and to be able to interact. Connectivity has

helped to keep the world running almost as normal, but nothing like live face-to-face conversations and meetings and getting to know each other and getting to know you, and to be able to connect better to push for the issues that impact you the most. So again, thank you very much. I appreciate this time with you and look for continuous engagement in the future. Thank you all.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks a lot, Ihab. Thanks for those remarks and for sticking out your head, yourself and Mandla, in actually pushing our cause. It's really heartwarming to hear these messages from you, and we look forward to continue engagement with you and Ihab, and of course, wish you all the best in your role on the board.

I'd just like to pause here and ask staff, is there any comments or questions so far?

CLAUDIA RUIZ:

Hi Seun, thank you very much. We have a hand up from Abdulkarim, and we also have a comment from Javier Rúa-Jovet.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Let's take the comment first and then we'll give the floor to Abdulkarim.

CLAUDIA RUIZ: Okay, Javier's comment is, "I know there's important connectivity challenges in some of our regions, but it would be great if we could all at least see each other on screen. I wonder if ICANN could somehow help in places where there's less connectivity to try and at least achieve video for all."

SEUN OJEDEJI: Cool. Thanks, Javier. And of course, I wish there was—do we have perhaps somebody from tech? ICANN staff tech is there to provide a response. Otherwise, we take the comment, and of course, I think it's very important as well to start to look at how we can better get these people join this call remotely, especially considering that this remote way of doing things is not going to end anytime soon. So maybe the aspect of regional [office] may need to start coming back. But of course, in light of the pandemic as well, it's also going to be difficult. But of course, we keep brainstorming on how to work around all these things.

I would give the floor to Abdulkarim to make his comments.

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE: Good morning, everybody. [inaudible] I don't know if my voice is that clear. My question is to all the board members and ICANN CEO present. We talk about the new reality, which is as a result of where we find ourselves because of COVID-19.

For example, we all now see that the new reality is that we would do things virtually. However, I think I want to ask that, are we really

convinced that this is the new reality? This is because I think if we are really convinced, we are supposed to be doing things—what we’re supposed to be doing now is we’re adapting to it and have in place enabling policies. However, what I think we’re doing is we’re just having in place ad-hoc policies.

I’ll give you examples. What do we think is going to happen if we still find ourselves in this current situation this time next year? Are we going to be saying—[inaudible] we have policies in place to say, “Okay, because of the new reality, one out of our three meetings is now going to be virtually online from now on,” or have in place policies similar to that?

And for example again, we are now adapting to the new reality which is doing things virtually. Zoom bombing is something we all know about. I think we didn't really have in place policies to guide strongly against it until it happened again yesterday. And what we now have is e-mails flying around saying we’re going to put in measures. This is something we’re supposed to have known about for some time.

So my thinking is I would have thought that we’d have complete measures which would have been in place in line with this new reality. So my key question is, are we putting in place concrete measures in line with the new reality? And again, why are we going meeting by meeting? Because I think we’re thinking probably by the end of this year, we’ll have found a vaccine. That’s what a lot of us are thinking. And my thinking, again, is, what if there is no vaccine this time next year? Are we going to be going meeting by meeting?

And even if these measures are lifted, we're sure there are going to be stricter measures against—or in line with [inaudible] for visa application and things like that. So my question is, will we have a concrete plan going forward? Thank you very much.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thank you, Abdulkarim, for the intervention and the question. I see León's hand is up. León, you have the floor.

LEÓN SANCHEZ: Thank you, Seun. Thank you, Abdulkarim, for your question and your concern. This pandemic caught us all off guard, and I don't think that anyone was prepared to live or to go through what we're going through. You are right, we need to establish policies. Of all organizations, ICANN has a ton of policies in place for many things. But again, I guess we didn't have this kind of situation foreseen, and we don't have a policy in place to respond at this very moment.

I think that what Göran was highlighting and what I tried to convey was that this policy, again, will come from the wider discussion with all the community. Of course, the At-Large community is an important piece of this puzzle, but we also need to take into account the rest of the community. We also need to talk to the different SOs and ACs, the different constituencies, and we all need to shape this policy. So I guess a first step has already begun. This phased approach that has been put forward for discussion, I think it's a good first step. Of course, whatever comes out from this will be fruit of our bottom-up decision

making process. So please, I ask you to bear with everyone, not only with the board or Org or with the rest of the community, but with everyone. Again, as I said, we're a team, we're all in this together, we're all suffering in lesser or higher degrees the challenges that we're facing because of this pandemic. And I'm convinced that only together will we be able to tackle the challenges and issues that we're all facing.

So you're not alone in this concern, Abdulkarim, but we need to work together on this. I hope that kind of answers a little bit your question.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks a lot, León, for that response. It's comforting to always be reminded of the fact that we are all in this together. And nobody expected what has happened in 2020 right now to actually be occurring.

We're actually running out of time, and I would just ask that interventions be as brief as possible going forward. So I would then hand it over to our vice president GSE for Africa, Pierre Dandjinou. Pierre has been a strong supporter of AFRALO and we really thank him for that. One of the things that he normally says is that we wish we can do more. So we are really happy that we are getting the most support that we can provided for us in AFRALO and the region entirely. Over to you, Pierre.

PIERRE DANDJINOU:

Thank you very much, Seun, and very good morning, afternoon to everyone. A pleasure to be here again, a pleasure to attend this remote meeting, and definitely also happy to have read your project, draft statement.

As far as I'm concerned, I believe that you guys deserve of course many thanks. Thanks for at least, I would say, supporting the work we've been doing as ICANN in Africa with my team. You've been there. You have participated to so many efforts that we've been providing to make sure that Africa participate to ICANN, but also that Africa contribute to ICANN. And I would really like to thank you for that.

[I recognize] so many names here, and thanks to our board members, and definitely thanks to Mandla for these perfect French remarks that she delivered. It was wonderful.

Well, what to say, your statements actually dealt with a few issue that we all know, especially when we're living in our geography, meaning the shortage of [inaudible] connectivity, and it's a great thing that you guys are thinking about recommendation and measures. And as Göran also said, it's quite opportune that you guys are coming up with these statements. And he also highlighted what ICANN has been doing in terms of preparing the transitional phase so that we could eventually have this face-to-face meeting that we're all used to.

But people say that things are not going to be as they're used to be, that we have to adjust to some changes. And the changes, definitely, you guys are also going to be part of this, because it's about the empowered community, as you said. And back to Abdulkarim's

question, yes, and as Javier has pointed adequately, there's going to be a kind of solution that we need to kind of [sit] together as a community, as a multi-stakeholder.

Let me quickly—I know we don't have much time for it, but let me again insist on the Africa strategy that you guys have crafted recently. That is coming here again to reinforce what we've been doing, which is about capacity building. Africa is about capacity building most of the time. Before you could also participate efficiently, you just need to handle some things, you just need to master some of the issues that we are tackling.

By the way, when you talk about connectivity and also about the connectivity divide actually you guys are talking about. I'm keen on saying—and that's a response I've been giving for so many years now, that most of the work also is still to be done at home, homework, meaning how do our countries beef up their connectivity. They need to continue thinking about that one.

Engagement, or I will say outreaching to those who'll be taking decision in our countries also it's something that definitely I believe you guys from Africa and AFRALO could really help. You help us develop this strategy, and this strategy plan for Africa which of course definitely has been harmonized with ICANN strategy itself, has a few objectives, and I'm not going to [inaudible] them here, but definitely, they are mostly geared towards capacity building. So we'll really have to rely on you also when we are delivering the many courses or workshops that we've planned.

One last thing is about the level of engagement that we are having in Africa. We do believe that, again, you guys can really be instrumental in helping us move to the second layer, which is to be able to engage with as varied community as possible and also make sure that we spread the word but also that we're able to impart some of the way we are doing business in Africa.

Say for instance the regulators who really like to put an emphasis on regulatory, especially when it comes to security, when it comes to DNS issues and we've lined up a few webinars and eventually face-to-face meeting with those. We would like you guys to be part of these sort of efforts.

Well, so many things to say, but I also understand that you guys are going to go through your statements. I would like to take that time. Just to enforce again our thank to you guys for what you've done, for the effort, and also for you guys for keeping what I might say is this energy you have to come to those statements every ICANN meeting. And I see some of you [inaudible]. I'm not going to cite all of them, but I think they definitely give some basis for participation and contribution from Africa.

Thank you all for having me, and I know my staff also is in attendance. Thanks everything. And then of course, looking forward to meeting you during our efforts in our engagement. Thanks, and over to you, Seun.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks a lot, Pierre. I think it's good to hear your comment, and of course, always refreshing, and AFRALO will continue to look forward to avenues of participation, collaboration, and will continue to engage.

Yes, I think we'll now move to the rest of the agenda, which is actually the main part of this agenda where we'll actually be talking about the statement. So I would call on Barrack Otieno to give an introduction on the thematic topic. Barrack, you have the floor.

BARRACK OTIENO:

Thank you, Chair. I hope I'm audible. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, everyone. I will go straight to the point, and basically, the AFRALO-AfrICANN statement is prepared by our RALO in each ICANN meeting. This has been a traditional activity that was started by AFRALO pioneers as our regional VP has mentioned. And the statement identifies and highlights issues of concern for the RALO that affect end users and articulates them during ICANN meetings such as this to the ICANN board, Org and the community.

So basically, this year's, or rather, for ICANN 68, the process entailed several steps which I'll quickly highlight before we let Sarah, AFRALO secretariat, read the statement. And basically, it starts with a call for topics, which was done earlier, and then a call for members to form the drafting team, and then the drafting statement or a process for drafting the statement which is collaborative, it includes members that have been identified to form the working group as well as RALO

members that might be interested in the statement that is being prepared.

So in this case, the drafting of the statement took place between 23rd of May and the 6th of June. And finally, it ends with the translation of the statement which took place as from the 7th of June.

So for ICANN 68, we prepared a statement that is going to be read by Sarah that touched on some of the steps and measures that should be taken by the ICANN Org, board and community in alleviating the effects of calamities or pandemics on the policy development processes.

And even as I conclude, I'd like to thank the AFRALO leadership led by Seun and Aziz who ensure that we are well guided in preparing the statement, and also, the AFRALO secretariat, that is Sarah, who was actually the main penholder. And all the members of the drafting team that contributed to development of the topic. And with that, I'd like to—and sorry, finally, I'd also like to thank ICANN staff who ensured that the statement was translated and made ready for this session. And with that, I'd like to hand over the floor to Sarah so that she can read the statement, and thereafter, we'll be guided by the chair on the next steps. Thank you very much.

SARAH KIDEN:

Hello everyone. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to you. I will be reading the statement. I would like to request that staff displays the statement. Thank you. Please note that this meeting was

scheduled to take place on Wednesday the 24th and we rescheduled it to Tuesday, so some of the dates may be wrong, but we'll adjust them as we go along. So I'll read the statement now.

Our topic is enhancing the resilience of the ICANN community in the face of calamities. We the African ICANN community members participating in the ICANN 68 virtual policy forum and attending the joint AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting on Tuesday the 23rd of June 2020 discussed measures that can be taken to enhance the resilience of the ICANN community in the face of natural or manmade disasters and calamities like pandemics, earthquakes, cyclones, floods, wildfires, wars, and others.

We conducted a survey among our AFRALO members to ascertain the challenges they are facing due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, especially how it has impacted their engagement in ICANN activities. Our objective was to assess and have a fair measure of engagement and business continuity within the ICANN community when confronted with uncertainties.

Among other issues, the survey revealed the challenges confronted by the respondents with Internet connectivity around access, cost, quality and speed, that hindered their participation in ICANN activities during the pandemic. Respondents noted poor Internet connectivity at home compared to the office which made working from home a herculean task coupled with having to share the bandwidth with other members of the family.

Respondents noted fatigue and difficulty in balancing work and volunteer commitments, especially during ICANN virtual meetings and working group calls. Respondents in rural areas experienced challenges with constant supply of electricity from the national grid or alternative sources like generators yet, could not access Internet cafes due to government restrictions on movement from the lockdown during the pandemic.

As desirable as the dial-out options to attend ICANN calls or meetings, were the inequality in access to the Zoom meetings due to the costs related to data purchases, thereby making the experience and the calls less interactive as participants missed out on chats and items being shared on the screen during the calls.

We would like to make the following comments. First, we would like to commend the ICANN org and Board for their leadership in managing the challenges that affected the ICANN community in the face of calamities similar to the ones experienced in Puerto Rico in 2018 and the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We acknowledge the contributions of the ICANN Board, org and community for the efforts that have been made in the past to minimize the impact of calamities on the ability of community members to actively contribute to policy development processes in their respective communities.

While we applaud the efforts made by the ICANN org and Board, we find them to be inadequate in the developing countries. We therefore call upon ICANN org and the Board to investigate the impact of

calamities on the ability of community members to effectively contribute and participate in the policy development processes and come up with mechanisms and recommendations that will mitigate any negative impacts that calamities may cause on community members in future calamities.

Recommendation. We recommend the following key steps to assist in enhancing the resilience of the ICANN community against the impact of calamities and their effect on the ability of community members to contribute to policy development processes.

Commission a study to ascertain the impact of calamities on policy development processes across the ICANN organization as well as various Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees.

In consultation with various SOs and ACs, develop mechanisms that would mitigate the impact of calamities on the community's participation in various policy development processes.

Develop guidelines that would guarantee continuity of policy development processes across various SOs and ACs during calamities.

With the increasing need to rely on the Internet as a means of livelihood, more effort needs to be put towards keeping the Internet secure, stable and accessible. ICANN org needs to put more efforts towards ensuring the accessibility, security and resiliency of the Domain Name System through intensifying and reinforcing Universal Acceptance campaign efforts.

Support community awareness actions and provide more resources for better participation of community members in ICANN-related activities.

And finally, support local communities with local strategies for building resilience. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Thanks a lot. I think I'd just like to thank the team for drafting the statement. I will still hand it back to Sarah to coordinate the comments if there's any reaction, any suggestion for modification and things like that. By the way, we have the French version as well. I think it's linked on the agenda. So please, our French colleagues, you can also have a look at the French version and also—okay, thanks. Staff has displayed it on the screen, actually.

So I'll hand it back to Sarah and then we'll see if there's any suggestion for modification. Once again, you have my appreciation to all the team that actually worked on this, on developing this statement. It's something that we continue to call for volunteers and then we get some people who respond, it's a good thing, and we hope that as we continue to do this activity, we'll continue to see volunteers emerge, new volunteers actually, to contribute to this statement.

I will now hand it back to Sarah. You have the floor.

SARAH KIDEN: I've shared a link for those of you who are on Zoom. You can follow the edits. So if you have any questions or comments or suggestions about anything you think we should edit, we will get them now, and then we will—it usually takes about a week or two to synchronize these comments, and then we'll send it to the relevant persons. And I see we have a hand up from Abdeldjalil.

ABDELDJALIL BACHAR BONG: Yes. Thank you, Sarah. Just I need to add that the ALS need more [people] for our capacity building because as you know, after ICANN 66 in Canada, [inaudible] ambassador of ALAC, so we need to do more and more for our local communities [inaudible] ICANN for more support [inaudible] [local initiatives] because as you know, with COVID, it's not so easy. So [inaudible] here. Thank you so much.

SARAH KIDEN: Thank you, Abdeldjalil. I have taken note of that. So at the end of the document, you'll see that I'm taking note of all the comments. And I see no hands, so I don't know if anyone has any other comments or edits to the document. If there are no comments, I think I'll hand over back to Seun and then maybe we'll give you back a few minutes of your time. So back to you, Seun Ojedeji. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Sarah, and thanks for coordinating that phase of the agenda. I think one good thing that we need to also remember is that when we send the statements, we do get a response from the board.

At times, it could be from ICANN staff leadership, at times it could also be from the ALAC leadership. Because the statement itself speaks to various aspects of ICANN, so we actually got the response for the last statements from the CTO of ICANN.

The good thing about all this is that it's an indication that our statements are read, our voices are heard, and actions are required in some of them are actually also noted and taken. I think one of the things that we mentioned in the last statement was in relation to universal acceptance, and we note that there was indeed some big announcement regarding universal acceptance where we now have our own Mohamed as aiding that particular group in ICANN, and we are very happy and glad to actually have a former AFRALO chair, and of course, a friend of Africa and AFRALO community in that role.

I just, on behalf of my colleagues, want to congratulate Mohamed El Bashir on his appointment, and of course, to also wish him all the best as he leads in that role as the ... I think the news about that role can also be shared, the link can be shared in the chat if staff can find it.

I think it's been a good session. I'm not seeing that there's any other comments or question, but of course, I thank everyone who attended this call, I thank a lot of staff. My appreciation to staff, to the translators for actually support. Of course, when everything works well, we don't remember the tech team. So my appreciation to the tech team for making sure that everything remains operational and without much surprises. The other thing is I'd like to thank all our

speakers, our guest speakers right from the CEO, Göran, and of course, to the vice chair, León. I think León has stayed with us from the beginning of the call until now, and that is very much appreciated. Thanks to the vice president, Pierre Dandjinou for his attendance on this call and of course for his remarks which he made on the call as well.

Appreciation to my colleagues, the vice chair of AFRALO, Aziz, and of course, the secretary of AFRALO, Sarah Kiden for their support, and of course, for their useful and helpful guidance. Thanks to Silvia for all the background interaction. a lot of things happened in the background to actually make this work, and of course, thanks a lot to all those who've participated in this. My appreciation to our board members from Africa, Ihab and Mandla for the attendance and I think for staying throughout this call with us. It's a good thing to have you, and we're honored to have you in our presence, and we also will be counting on you at holding to your words as you earlier mentioned.

So I think this is where we give you back 15 minutes of your time, which I hope that can help us prepare for the next session that will be coming up, but from me, on behalf of the entire AFRALO, I say thank you very much for joining this call, and of course, see you again on the next ICANN session. Bye for now.

LEÓN SANCHEZ:

Thanks, everyone. Bye.

IHAB OSMAN: Thank you, everyone. Thank you, Seun, for the leadership.

MANDLA MSIMANG: Yes. Thank you. Have a good day. Bye.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]