

United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development

Twenty years in the implementation of outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

Name of organization: **Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers**

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Role of Respondent: **Interim President and CEO, ICANN**

Date of Response: **15 November 2024**

I. What is your organisation's formal role and responsibilities concerning WSIS implementation?

a. Mandates of your organization relevant to the WSIS implementation

ICANN coordinates the Internet's unique identifier systems, which enable people all over the world to connect from any device that's connected to the Internet. It is ICANN's responsibility to help the Internet community preserve a stable, open, globally interoperable, and resilient Internet, more precisely its identifier systems. To do that, ICANN shares its technical expertise with all relevant stakeholders to assess the potential impact of their initiatives on the functioning of the Internet and to better understand and define the situations they seek to address. ICANN's role complements efforts to achieve the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and WSIS outcomes.

b. Brief History of your organization's contribution to the World Summit on the information Society (WSIS)

The WSIS Tunis Agenda establishes a shared understanding and empowers all stakeholders to work collaboratively toward achieving the WSIS outcomes. The firm commitment and collaborative spirit by WSIS stakeholders have had a significant and positive influence on the development of a "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society."

ICANN has contributed significantly to the implementation of the WSIS outcomes. ICANN's multistakeholder model (MSM) of governance, which is critical to ensuring a secure, stable, and interoperable Internet, exemplifies the multistakeholder collaborative approach in the WSIS Tunis Agenda.

Preserving and improving the MSM, as enshrined in the Tunis Agenda and reconfirmed in the WSIS+10 Outcome Document, ensures that relevant stakeholders, including the technical community as a distinct stakeholder, will continue to work together to make sure that the Internet will continue to grow as an invaluable resource available to everyone. ICANN's commitment to enhancing the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, while

keeping the interoperable Internet functioning, is a key element of achieving the U.N. SDGs and WSIS goals, and one to which ICANN will continue to contribute.

c. Implementation processes and initiatives within your organization and/or in partnership with other organisations

ICANN capacity building initiatives include raising awareness and providing factual information about how the Internet works, and on ICANN's activities, through:

- Informative publications on technical topics which are available on [ICANN's Website](#)
- Providing briefings for governments and diplomats, both in capitals and at the U.N. (in New York and Geneva)
- Directly engage with ministries of foreign affairs, telecommunications administrations, and regulators – primarily through the ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee, e-governance agencies, cybersecurity officials in key countries, and others
- Provide briefings for the ICANN community during ICANN Public Meetings to inform community members on relevant geopolitical developments that could potentially affect the Internet
- Publish papers on developments at the U.N., International Telecommunication Union, and other relevant Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), as well as country-focused reports
- Raise awareness and promote the deployment of technical solutions, such as Domain Name System Security Extensions (DNSSEC), which help secure the transmission of information across the Internet.
 - For example, ICANN conducts capacity development workshops in regions worldwide to raise awareness and encourage DNSSEC adoption.
 - ICANN's global community is dedicated to maintaining a secure, stable Domain Name System (DNS) that reflects the diverse linguistic landscape through initiatives such as Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). These achievements are possible through ICANN's global community and its multistakeholder policy development process.
- ICANN routinely engages with its community members, as well as with Internet-related technical organizations, academic institutions, businesses, and civil society organizations, to provide updates on ICANN's activities and involvement within the international community. ICANN is committed to openness and transparency, and ICANN meetings, which are free and open to all, provide a platform to share and provide information.

II. What have been your organization's main contributions to the direct implementation of the WSIS outcomes and related areas of digital development since the Summit, particularly since 2015?

- a. WSIS Action Lines (as lead, co-facilitator or supporting participant)
- b. WSIS-related projects

- **ICANN's Multistakeholder Model of Governance:** ICANN is a pioneer in adopting the multistakeholder approach, integrating it deeply into its operations and decision-making processes.. ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance ensures that as the Internet grows, the Internet's DNS remains stable and resilient, with policies and processes developed through broad consensus. Key aspects include:
 - Community-Based Policy Development: ICANN facilitates a bottom-up, consensus-driven process where stakeholders collaboratively develop policies related to the Internet's naming and numbering systems.
 - Diverse Participation: The model ensures participation from a global community that includes individual users, private sector stakeholders, technical experts, and government representatives, each bringing unique perspectives to Internet governance.
- **IANA Transition:** The Internet Assigned Number Authority (IANA) stewardship transition in 2016 is widely regarded as a key success of the MSM of Internet governance, demonstrating the global community's ability to make collaborative decisions regarding the management of critical Internet resources. The process of transferring oversight of ICANN's performance of the IANA functions to the global Internet community involved extensive consultations with stakeholders worldwide, including governments, the private sector, civil society, and technical experts. The successful transition exemplified the ability of the MSM to leverage a noncentralized process to address complex issues by fostering transparency, inclusivity, and accountability, thus ensuring the Internet remains open and accessible to all.
- **UA and IDNs:** Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) are domain names in local languages or scripts. IDNs are an important part of the expansion of the DNS, as they allow native speakers of non-Latin based scripts to access the Internet in their own language. To fully harness the power of IDNs, ICANN champions the principle of Universal Acceptance (UA) - accepting, validating, storing, processing, and displaying domain names and email addresses correctly and consistently across all applications, devices, and systems.
 - ICANN helps support the stable and secure use of IDNs through the development of rules that allow specific scripts to be used safely in the DNS.
 - One part of the process is to develop a consistent and transparent mechanism to determine valid IDN top-level domain (TLD) labels and their variant labels for the different scripts used by global communities.
 - Over the past eight years, various ICANN script communities have formed Generation Panels (GPs), made up of DNS, language, and script experts, who work together to develop the rules needed to safely form TLDs in their respective scripts.
 - The ICANN community is leading policy development work to allow for further secure and usable solutions under generic and country code IDN TLDs.

- Organized by ICANN and the volunteer-led Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG), UA Day was established in 2023 as a means to rally local, regional, and global stakeholders to spread UA awareness and encourage UA adoption through a mix of virtual, in-person, and hybrid training sessions.
- **DNS Abuse and Mitigation:** ICANN has established a DNS Abuse Mitigation Program. This program serves as a centralized platform to address various aspects of DNS Abuse and aims to support the ICANN community in mitigating harmful activities associated with domain names, such as botnets, malware, pharming, phishing, and spam.

ICANN org strives to combat DNS Abuse in accordance with ICANN Bylaws and policies. An ICANN cross-functional team supports a three-pronged approach to combating DNS Abuse. This includes:

- Contributing data and expertise to fact-based discussions
- Providing tools to the ICANN community
- Enforcing contractual obligations with registries and registrars
- **Capacity Building and Development:** The MSM fosters diversity in solutions, particularly benefiting developing countries and those in remote and rural areas. It enables the creation of tailored connectivity solutions that meet their needs. The MSM encourages partnerships, investments, and capacity development support from the private sector to help address the digital divide. One example is ICANN's Coalition for Digital Africa, which brings together stakeholders to expand the Internet in Africa, promote innovation, and strengthen Internet infrastructure to support the development of Africa's digital economy.
- **Grant Program:** The ICANN Grant Program, which closed its first round of applications in May 2024, invites eligible organizations worldwide to apply for funding for projects aligned with ICANN's mission. Through the Program, ICANN hopes to positively impact people all over the world by investing in creative and innovative solutions that further ICANN's vision of a single, open, and globally interoperable Internet.
- **gTLD Next Round and ASP:** ICANN is committed to enhancing global diversity and regional representation through the New gTLD Program: Next Round, which has the potential to boost competition and expand choice in the domain name market by introducing new gTLDs. This is especially important to ICANN community members who are focused on ensuring that applicants from developing economies are not at a competitive disadvantage. To support this objective, ICANN has introduced the Applicant Support Program – a key initiative within the next round of new gTLDs – designed to promote global accessibility and fair competition. By offering resources to applicants in underserved regions, this program seeks to serve the public interest

by fostering a more inclusive and competitive domain landscape, enabling broader participation and innovation worldwide.

c. Indicators used to measure the impact of ICT in the achievement of the SDGs in your organization's area of work

d. What assessment has your organization made of its engagement in WSIS-related work and digital development in its areas of responsibility?

III. What does your organization see as the main achievements, problems and emerging issues arising from WSIS and from digital development in its areas of responsibility since the Summit, particularly since 2015?

a. What have been the main achievements of WSIS and digital development?

Digital Inclusivity

Tremendous progress has been made towards multilingualism and digital inclusivity since WSIS in 2005 and the U.N. WSIS High Level meeting in 2015. Beyond being connected to the Internet, it is essential that everyone has the opportunity to engage meaningfully, including in their native language or script. Recognizing that mere access to the Internet is insufficient, collaboration within the ICANN community has led to the delegation of 151 IDNs, including both generic and country code top-level domains. These domains support 37 languages across 23 scripts, demonstrating a commitment to linguistic diversity. Furthermore, ICANN has collaborated with stakeholders in the ICANN community to establish rules for 26 commonly used scripts, spanning over 350 languages.

Placing people at the center of development, a solid foundation was¹ established that continuously promoted stakeholder inclusion, collaboration, and meaningful participation to maximize possibilities and address the challenges ahead. The multistakeholder model remains pivotal in propelling digital transformation forward.

Challenges and Opportunities

New challenges have emerged in the digital landscape, such as content-related issues (which are beyond ICANN's remit), cyber threats, erosion of trust, etc. Geopolitical concerns like digital sovereignty further complicate matters. Consequently, the strong foundation for a "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society" is now at risk.

Efforts have been made to foster open dialogues and encourage collaboration among various stakeholders to find effective solutions for some of these challenges. But no single

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ITU Link: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>

entity can solve all issues; maintaining the integrity of the Internet is a collaborative effort. Regular conversations that include all stakeholders on an equal footing are crucial. The views of the technical community should be sought to address technical issues, acknowledging their contribution in the creation and the development of the Internet and their subject matter expertise. It is crucial to note that the Internet today was built through decades of hard work by numerous stakeholders. Stakeholders should continue advancing progress by building on the existing foundations.

Competing priorities, often resulting from geopolitical issues, pose a significant challenge. Governments, in pursuit of immediate solutions, may sometimes adopt a one-size-fits-all approach, potentially overlooking the commitments made in the WSIS Tunis Agenda and inadvertently putting the Internet at risk. Bringing relevant stakeholders to the table - on an equal footing - facilitates a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the issues at hand, be they infrastructure-related or content-related. Practical, sustainable, and implementable solutions emerge through this multistakeholder consultation process, leading to better outcomes. This is particularly true for the development of the Internet, given its nature as a distributed global network. Inclusion of the broader technical community in (inter)governmental Internet-related discussions is vital for achieving results that foster the Internet's continued development while avoiding unintended consequences such as Internet fragmentation. A robust, globally connected, and interoperable Internet underpins the WSIS outcomes.

Regardless of the many challenges it has confronted through the years, the multistakeholder model of Internet governance has proven its resilience. It remains the most effective approach for making well-informed policies and finding practical solutions for the further development of the Internet. For example, the multistakeholder approach for the drafting of policies and standards for the Internet remains robust and strong at technical organizations like ICANN or the Internet Engineering Task Force. The Internet Governance Forum also serves as a place to share ideas and best practices. The MSM has repeatedly proven to be the most effective approach for managing a distributed network like the Internet. By bringing together stakeholders from diverse sectors, this model enables collaborative solutions to address the complex and evolving challenges that the Internet faces.

IV. Lessons learned in the implementation of the Summit outcomes in your organisation's specific areas of responsibility

V. Observations or recommendations concerning the future of WSIS and digital development, taking into account the outcomes of the Summit of the Future in September 2024

ICANN shared a blog on "[Key Takeaways from the U.N. Global Digital Compact Process](#)," including lessons learned from the outcomes of the Summit of the Future.

VI. Please identify publications, reports and other documents by your

organisation which you consider can contribute to the work of the review.

A few ICANN Multistakeholder model achievements: [Internationalized Domain Names](#), [DNS Abuse](#), [Coalition for Digital Africa](#), [IANA stewardship transition](#)

ICANN's multistakeholder model ensures that as the Internet grows, it remains safe, stable, and resilient, with [policies and processes](#) developed through broad consensus.

ICANN's Government and IGO engagement [publications](#) and [third party contributions](#).

The WSIS+20 Outreach Network [Webpage](#)

Useful reference links:

Geneva and Tunis outcome documents from WSIS -

<https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/outcome/booklet/index.html>

The General Assembly's ten-year review report -

<https://publicadministration.un.org/wsis10/Portals/5/N1543842.pdf>

The CSTD ten-year review -

https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstict2015d3_en.pdf

Contributions should be submitted by 15 November 2024 to the CSTD Secretariat at cstd-wsis20@unctad.org. They will be made available on the CSTD website for consideration by the Commission unless contributors specifically request that their submissions should not be published.