Leaving Report of
General Manager of Public Participation
November 2009

This a report from the departing General Manager of Public Participation, Kieren McCarthy.

The purpose of the report is to provide an assessment both of ICANN's participation efforts and the role of the General Manager of Public Participation.

It will include some details of efforts by other organizations to broaden participation in their processes and pull out any best practices or lessons.

And it will include some recommendations for ICANN from the perspective of the General Manager of Public Participation.

The expectation is that this report will be made public in order to enable discussions with the community about possible future changes and approaches. The Board Public Participation Committee has also expressed an interest in viewing the full report.

Executive Summary

Kieren McCarthy served as ICANN's General Manager of Public Participation (GMPP) from February 2007 to November 2009. This report aims to act as a forward-looking guide for future ICANN participation efforts.

The reports contains a number of recommendations. Key among them are:

- That the current GMPP role, as written into the ICANN's bylaws, be split into two. First, a General Manager of Public Participation that works most closely with the Policy department but reports directly to the CEO. And, second, a Director of Online Services, who is given explicit authority over all ICANN's websites and related online services, reports to the VP of Communications and is added to ICANN's Executive Team.

- That a community-led review of ICANN's public comment process be carried at the soonest opportunity, with a recent memorandum from the ALAC used as the foundation for discussions for how to improve and update the process.

- That far greater attention is given as an organization to the cultural and societal factors that affect participation, rather than continue to seek technological solutions to low levels of participation. Key among these is an issue of online interaction, recently highlighted by an Ombudsman report into civility.

With respect to the tools used for enabling participation from a broader range of global participants:

- ICANN offers a higher level of public participation than comparable organizations, but falls down by not providing a consistent or intuitive interface.

- ICANN staff continues to focus resources on those already heavily engaged in the organization's processes, building an invisible wall to potential new participants

- At this moment in time, the barriers to participation lie not in technology but in its effective use and the inclusion of existing tools into ongoing processes

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Introduction and overview:

I was offered the job of General Manager of Public Participation to ICANN in December 2006 mostly because I had been a consistent and vocal critic of ICANN, particularly its lackluster efforts to engage with the global Internet community it purported to serve.

As I leave, nearly three years later, ICANN has made significant advances in how it interacts with the Internet community, resulting in far more professional and productive engagement, but it still has a significant way to go before it can be proud of its participation record as a multi-stakeholder organization.

When I joined, the front page of the ICANN website comprised of a number of loosely connected hyperlinks in different colored boxes, with a long list of announcements going down the page that provided little or no context or explanation of the work the organization was undertaking.

Public comment periods – a crucial part of ICANN's processes – were opened with a single announcement, often unnoticed, and then closed shortly after, usually with no effort made to either summarize any comments or to contact commenters.

Staff provided almost no material to allow people to keep up-to-date with ICANN work, with information typically provided on a range of mailing lists or in one-to-one email contact. Virtually no information was available in anything but English, and when it was, the community complained about the quality of the translation.

The result of this lack of public communication was a strong insider culture that was frequently remarked upon by other members of the community and which resulted in widespread mistrust of ICANN staff and thereby ICANN as an organization.

The situation as it stands in November 2009 is much improved. There are regular magazines and updates, active community communication, a public comment periods page, a revamped website, greatly improved and expanded translation, and numerous other changes. But even with these improvements, ICANN still has plenty of room to improve – and needs to do just that as it enters a new period of its history.

While ICANN has greatly expanded its headcount in order to provide a more professional and consistent service, there remains a notable lack of staff members with communications skills, and this crucial aspect of the organization – making sure that people can follow and understand what work is being done, has been done and will shortly be done – is underserved.

Although "participation" is consistently highlighted by each section of the community as a significant issue, there remains too little organizational focus or dedicated resources, beyond the role of General Manager of Public Participation, to help address these concerns.

The reason for this is not difficult to grasp: ICANN, and particularly ICANN staff, has been under a workload that it has struggled to deal with almost since its inception. With a staff unable to find time to even reflect on completed deadlines, it is not surprising that efforts to introduce wider participation – and hence more comments and so more work – are not top of the agenda.

When such efforts introduce more work into the process – for example, the production of documents that explain in plain language recent changes made, or a proactive effort to engage more individuals in a given public comment period – it is, again, not surprising that ICANN staff does not place public participation high on its priorities.

And there is a third factor – the ICANN community remains very critical and, until recently, was often actively hostile toward staff. This challenging environment resulted in less, rather than more, outward communication. Although this "bunker mentality" has noticeably lifted in recent years, thanks to the influx of new staff and more open communication, it remains a cultural default that staff fall into when faced with an almost overwhelming wave of work and deadlines.

These factors remain in place but it is the strongly held view of the General Manager of Public Participation that ICANN needs to address the issue of public participation in a far more expansive and professional manner in 2010.

With the conclusion of the Joint Project Agreement in September 2009, and the creation of a new Affirmation of Commitments, ICANN is now directly accountable to the global Internet community. Unless ICANN tackles a number of participation issues within the next 12 months, it is probable that the global Internet community will report back to the organization that it is failing in its duty to see beyond its relationship with the US government and the small group of dedicated ICANN community members that follow the organization closely.

Much of the discussion of the Affirmation so far has focused on the practicalities of the series of four reviews outlined in the Affirmation. However, included in the

Affirmation's 11 clauses are two that go to the heart of effective public participation within ICANN.

Paragraph four states that: "ICANN commits to perform and publish analyses of the positive and negative effects of its decisions on the public, including any financial impact on the public, and the positive or negative impact (if any) on the systemic security, stability and resiliency of the DNS."

As the organization stands at the moment, it is not able to effectively address this issue as its organizational awareness and information-gathering does not stretch beyond the 500 or so regular community members. ICANN does not have the tools, resources or appropriately skilled employees to reach beyond its immediate circle. It will need to do so if this part of the Affirmation is to be adequately addressed.

Secondly, paragraph seven reads: "ICANN commits to adhere to transparent and accountable budgeting processes, fact-based policy development, cross-community deliberations, and responsive consultation procedures that provide detailed explanations of the basis for decisions, including how comments have influenced the development of policy consideration, and to publish each year an annual report that sets out ICANN's progress against ICANN's bylaws, responsibilities, and strategic and operating plans. In addition, ICANN commits to provide a thorough and reasoned explanation of decisions taken, the rationale thereof and the sources of data and information on which ICANN relied."

In order to fulfill this commitment, ICANN has little choice but to engage in a community-led review and overhaul of its public comments process. The current process has been improved upon but is not sufficiently robust, consistent or responsive to provide what is outlined in the Affirmation. The At Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) recently published and provided to the Board a somewhat critical paper on the public comment process that would provide a useful start-point for a community-led review of the comment process.

As such, the first recommendation of this report is that the ALAC paper be used to start an immediate, community-led, review of the public comment process.

> **RECOMMENDATION ONE: That a community-led review of ICANN's public comment process be carried at the soonest opportunity, with a recent memorandum from the ALAC used as the start-point for discussions on how to improve and update the process.**

The role of General Manager of Public Participation:

The General Manager of Public Participation is unusual in that it is one of only three staff positions mentioned in the organization's bylaws (the others being the CEO and Ombudsman).

The role was first proposed by ICANN president Stuart Lynn in 2002 when he published a paper for reforming ICANN. Lynn's vision for the Manager of Public Participation came in three parts:

a) Responsible for managing the public comment and participation process for ICANN on all substantive matters. Will solicit, receive and report to the Board on all public input on matters put out for public comment.
b) Responsible for managing all ICANN public forums, public e-mail list, etc. Provided necessary electronic access to publicize findings and recommendations, all of which will be available to the public.
c) Provided with support staff and other resources necessary to carry out responsibilities effectively

Following extensive self-review, the role was eventually introduced into the bylaws with the following scope:

"There shall be a staff position designated as Manager of Public Participation, or such other title as shall be determined by the President, that shall be responsible, under the direction of the President, for coordinating the various aspects of public participation in ICANN, including the Website and various other means of communicating with and receiving input from the general community of Internet users."

As ICANN has grown and matured, some staff members have questioned whether this bylaw specification remains fit-for-purpose. Is the role still needed as described above, or have aspects of it been effectively coordinated by other departments within ICANN?

Having been in the position for nearly three years, it is the considered view of the current General Manager of Public Participation that the current bylaw actually neatly describes a role needed to fix a fundamental discrepancy in ICANN's functioning.

While efforts to allow the public to participate within ICANN have exploded in recent years, they continue to be undermined by a fundamental lack of coordination and consistency. Different departments within ICANN, and, indeed, different parts of the ICANN community, continue to approach the same fundamental processes in widely different ways.

A fundamental need, recognized multiple times by the community and clearly reflected in the Affirmation of Commitments, is to allow for "cross-community deliberations". However, while there continue to be different methods and approaches to announce, introduce, run, review, summarize, analyze and implement the basic work that ICANN undertakes, it will always be difficult for different parts of ICANN to communicate effectively with one another.

As such, the General Manager of Public Participation's bylaw role of "coordinating the various aspects of public participation in ICANN" has never been of greater importance or value to ICANN.

The challenges in trying to coordinate participation efforts while expanding them across the organization have been significant, not least because different groups have grown used to their particular ways of doing things and so are resistant to change. However, there exists now an opportunity for a new General Manager of Public Participation to make such processes more consistent, while also improving them, in the interests of cross-community deliberations.

Since it is the Policy department within ICANN's staff that has the most day-to-day dealings with the community and engages in the largest number of participation efforts, it would make sense to locate the General Manager of Public Participation within that department. However the GMPP should retain the explicit provision currently within the bylaws that the role report directly to the President and CEO so that a strategic overview and, crucially, intellectual independence be retained.

It would then be worth adjusting or restating the bylaw provision creating the job of General Manager of Public Participation so that the role's position and function is clearly understood by the whole organization. The GMPP should remain the staff support for the Board's Public Participation Committee (PPC) for obvious reasons.

> **RECOMMENDATION TWO: That the position of General Manager of Public Participation be restated in ICANN's bylaws, given the task of coordinating public participation across ICANN, and included as part of the Policy department while retaining explicit reporting rights to the CEO and President.**

The second part of the current GMPP bylaw description concerns the organization's websites. Again, it has been pointed out that the word "website" rather than "websites" appears in the bylaws. The two are synonymous. Immediately above the GMPP description is a bylaw description of "website", which clearly includes most, if not all, of ICANN's numerous websites.

As the current GMPP, it has been a very difficult task to deal with both the participation processes and ICANN's websites due to the sheer amount of work and resistance to change in both arenas. This difficulty is only going to grow over time and as such, I strongly recommend the creation of a new role to deal solely with ICANN's websites and related online services.

ICANN's websites are the organization's main vehicle for providing, sharing, discussing and updating information. As such, they are of crucial importance to the organization. However, ICANN has suffered significantly from there being no single coordinator, despite the GMPP's bylaw provision.

Websites are outdated, inconsistent, manually maintained, poorly designed and difficult to navigate.

There has been a determined effort for over a year to get the wide variety of ICANN websites - which range from the blog, to different sites for each SO and AC, to the main ICANN site, to specific meeting websites, to a public participation site, and so on – pulled into a database so that maintenance becomes less cumbersome.

This process is finally coming to a close and should be completed in the first half of 2010, but it is important to note that it has taken far longer than it should have, and with far less useful results, because of the large number of individuals who expressed some aspect of control over different websites.

As it stands, all of ICANN's websites serve the community badly. Any changes require a convoluted and time-consuming approval process. A very limited number of individuals have any form of editing access, causing pages to fall out of date and the websites to under-serve their users. The community feels shut out from the processes that they invest substantial amounts of their volunteer time working on; and staff feels hamstrung and unable to act swiftly enough.

Following a six-month usability study, carried out by external consultants, there is now a blueprint for improving the main ICANN website. However turning the blueprint into reality will likely take longer than it needs to and produce a less satisfying result that it should.

Internally, the web administration team spends every day dealing with requests for posting or altering information – a highly inefficient and time-consuming process that does not leave time for website improvement or content development.

Unlike every other organization that provides its material almost entirely online, ICANN does not possess a content development team, a sufficiently diverse web team, or an overseeing individual with sufficient authority to ensure the websites reflect the professional nature of ICANN's work.

Organizationally, and especially considering the importance of its online presence, ICANN has a huge hole in that there is no one with sufficient expertise and authority to oversee all of ICANN's web presences. The introduction of an individual with broad authority, a track record of running interacting corporate websites from the content perspective (as opposed to technical perspective), and the ability to build a team would have an enormously positive and almost immediate impact on ICANN as an organization.

A Director of Online Services who is given explicit authority over the functioning of all ICANN's websites and related online services would be of significant benefit to ICANN. While the Director would probably be best placed reporting to the Vice President of Communications, it would be important to make them a part of ICANN's Executive Team. This would enable the person to understand the organization's needs at the strategic level and also guide other executives on how websites can be used to enhance, rather than simply reflect, ongoing work.

If introduced, the new Director would take over the bylaw provision currently expressed as part of the GMPP role.

> **RECOMMENDATION THREE: That a new position of Director of Online Services be created and that person granted overall authority over all ICANN's websites and related online services. The role may report to the Vice President of Communications but would need to be included in ICANN's Executive Team to be effective.**

The barriers to and benefits of broader public participation:

Since its inception, ICANN has had no shortage of people willing to offer their opinions about what the organization should or should not do, and how it should or should not do it.

That feedback has been so constant, and often so vocal, that it has been all too easy to overlook the fact that there are too few people involved in ICANN's processes and that a number of barriers exist to those not already accustomed to ICANN.

But before going to the barriers, it may be important to ask the question: what are the benefits to broader public participation?

Apart from the fact that ICANN's very legitimacy rests on the fact that it allows anyone affected by the domain name system to be able to influence decisions made about that system, broader participation brings with a number of positive day-to-day benefits.

- **More minds, fewer mistakes.** Some of the decisions ICANN makes have an impact far beyond the regularly attending community. Even when there is a representative group of individuals within the process, the end result may not reflect what is needed in the broader context.

  One example is the issue of trademark protection in new gTLDs. Even though trademark lawyers were a part of the process all the way through, it was only when the Applicant Guidebook and new Internet extensions drew closer to reality that large corporates became fully aware of the details and actively lobbied ICANN to reconsider its approach. ICANN duly reconsidered but that process caused tension and delay.

  If ICANN's work was readily accessed by a larger number of people, it is possible that this situation would never have developed. Or put more simply, the more people that are able to easily and simply review ICANN's work, the more brains – and more expert brains – will be on call to find solutions.

  Due to the all-encompassing interest of early ICANN community members, the implicit assumption has been that more people equates to more views and a harder time developing a consensus position. In reality, the vast majority of people will want to dip in and out of subjects as something of particular interest arises. There remains a largely untapped source of expertise out there on the Internet that ICANN will only be able to access if it puts more effort into making its work and thinking readily accessible.

- **Less politics, more work product.** ICANN is an intensely political atmosphere for a number of reasons. One of the most significant is that with only a small number of people fully versed in the intricacies of ICANN rules and bylaws, there has traditionally been too few people on call to do the volunteer work that ICANN is dependent upon. When the same people gravitate in the same field for long enough, inter-personal relationships tend to overshadow individuals' practical value.

  Until recently, it was not uncommon to find the same few individuals making decisions on a wide range of unrelated issues, none of which they could be considered expert on. It is still common for everyone deciding an issue of global import to know one another on first-name terms.

  What broader participation lends ICANN in this sense is more of a focus on the issue and less on the individual; more effort put into finding solutions and less on internal politics. The end result will be more efficient, more effective decision-making for the organization.

- **Consensus leaders rise to the top.** With more people and broader participation, it becomes increasingly important for a leader to emerge that is capable of building consensus both within groups and with other groups. Since ICANN works on a consensus-based approach, the leaders most beneficial to the organization will be those whose focus is on reaching agreement rather than forcing through a position. The broader the participation, the more a consensus approach will begin to define leadership positions – to the betterment of the organization.

- **Spreading of information faster, with less effort.** One of the great advantages of having more people aware of, and interested in, an issue is that they act as an extremely efficient means of spreading information further afield through personal contacts. As more people participate within ICANN, the pressure on ICANN's small staff to provide information on a wide range of issues should diminish as a broader community takes the weight of supplying details.

- **Strengthening the ICANN model.** As more people become involved in ICANN, learn about ICANN and feel that they can follow and interact with the organization's work, the stronger the organization's model of multi-stakeholder decision-making becomes.

Those are some of the advantages of broader participation, so what are the barriers to prevent that from happening?

In my role as GMPP, I took a conscious decision early on to not go out and actively canvass for more participants until there were sufficient tools and resources in place to ensure that new participants were not immediately put off by arriving at an ICANN website or physical meeting with no guidance or explanation.

There is still plenty of work to be done in that area – the provision of clear, simple information; and a welcoming and helpful face to newcomers being just two – but increasingly the issue is less the tools for participation and more on the social rules and cultural norms within ICANN that limit or discourage active involvement.

Some examples with specific recommendations:

- **Language**. Although the quality and quantity of translation has greatly increased in the past two years, material in other languages is provided haphazardly. The result is that few non-English speakers are able to find material (even English speakers complain about finding information).

Basic information about how to respond to documents, and even more basically, the text of announcements giving background and instructions, is still often only provided in English. Until the process is viewed through the eyes of someone who does not speak or read English, ICANN will never actively engage the non-English speaking world – which make up a majority of Internet users.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: Through the website redesign, ICANN should actively engage non-English speakers to ensure that the opportunity isn't lost to provide a clear route for finding information in other languages.

- **Considering other cultures**. Too often the way of doing things is stuck to because that's the way it has always been done. Very few conversations are had that ask ICANN community members about personal aspects of interacting with the organization. Even when there *are* clear requests for change, the power of the engaged majority almost always ensures that the status quo remains. Some examples:

    Tea or coffee. It has long been the case that during breaks at ICANN meetings, coffee is served. Often only with cream. The problem is that many Europeans prefer milk with coffee; and most Asians prefer tea, often green tea. While this may seem a petty consideration, it has been raised many times by attendees and the situation remains the same. This reinforces a sense that ICANN is an unwelcoming monoculture.

    Public microphone. Some attendees to meetings, particularly Asian attendees, have long complained that they do not feel comfortable standing at a public microphone to ask confrontational questions of a panel or the Board. The result is that they feel disengaged. Despite this well-known issue, however, ICANN continues to use open microphone as the main – and often, only - way to introduce comment from the community during public sessions.

    Online civility. It has long been known that online interaction around ICANN's processes can often be hostile, even personally abusive. Rather than actively deal with this, there has been a sense that it is part of the rough-and-tumble of the multi-stakeholder model. However, the truth is that it is far more damaging than that.

    Many individuals are so turned off by being at the received end of disrespectful or abusive behavior that they refuse to interact any more with the organization – and then tell others not to bother to engage with ICANN. It is the equivalent of every salesman in a retail

store being rude to customers: the impact is far larger than just those customers that walk away.

The Ombudsman recently filed a report covering in some depth one incident of very poor civility, complete with a number of recommendations for improving the situation. ICANN risks ignoring this fundamental barrier to participation at its own peril.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE: That ICANN give active consideration to how its accepted norms act as a significant but invisible cultural barrier to participation, and work on changing working methods to accommodate different cultures. Most significant is the accepted low level of civility in online communications, which have a far more damaging impact that the organization realizes.

- **Rules and guidelines for online tools**. A wide range of tools now exist for participating with ICANN, whether remotely at meetings or through a working group or public comment period.

  However, those tools are currently being under-used and even abandoned because of a lack of consistent application and any clear rules or guidelines for their use. Remote participants have often complained that sometimes chatrooms for given meeting sessions are monitored and users are engaged, but other times there is no such monitoring and people are talking to an empty space.

  Even when there is active interaction, the introduction of any comments from remote participation remains ad hoc and dependent on the mood of the chair or chatroom monitor (if there is one). The lack of consistency removes the confidence of participants that it is worth investing their time.

  There is also little or no dialogue between different ICANN groups about methods of participation using online tools, and very little sharing of lessons learnt.

  RECOMMENDATION SIX: That ICANN staff develop – with the full involvement of key members of the community – a series of pragmatic guidelines for effective use of online tools.

- **Staff interaction with community members**. Too often community members are viewed by staff as a necessary evil – a situation that continues

to undermine trust between the two. Staff are, on occasion, encouraged to meet with community members but too often those interactions are formal and work-focused.

It should be a crucial part of ICANN staff members' jobs to actively engage with community members - particularly those they have not meet before. It would also be a significant advantage if more ICANN staff were multilingual.

RECOMMENDATION SIX: That ICANN's management accept, acknowledge and actively promote the need for staff to interact directly with community members of all types as a fundamental part of their job.

What works and what does not?

Getting into the specifics of participation, this section quickly reviews the different approaches taken to encourage and strengthen public participation, both during ICANN meetings and in between meetings.

- **Chatrooms** are an effective tool for making remote participants feel a part of ongoing discussions. However, too often they are viewed as a method for introducing questions into a sessions – something they are actually ill-suited for. The most effective process is when a chatroom is monitored by someone in a position to introduce questions and used alongside a separate but easily accessible question box.

  The two biggest problems with chatrooms remain: technology and awareness. No matter what flavor of chatroom is used, there will be at least one vocal participant that expresses his or her strong preference for a different technology.

  Quick examples: a hosted and embeddable chatroom solution appeared to work very well, but filled up with spam if not monitored; strong requests from one section of the community for ICQ chatrooms saw less tech-savvy participants unable to access them; likewise some people have Jabber accounts added to their machines by their IT departments – but everyday attendees have trouble accessing them.

  One of the biggest lessons with chatrooms is that the fewer of them there are, the more effective they are. Conversely the creation of too many chatrooms i.e. for each session, will cause a dramatic drop in engagement.

Most significant for effective chatroom use is:

- A limited number of clearly defined rooms (one per actual room for example)
- Make chatrooms as simple and easy to locate and enter as possible. Without clear signposts and a simple one-click entry point, participation falls away dramatically
- The provision of a moderator/observer in each chatroom (a logisitical challenge) is essential if conversation is to stay relevant and useful
- The promotion of chatrooms a long time before the session itself – preferably days – is vital so people become comfortable with its location

What needs to be recognized with the use of chatrooms is:

- Most conversation will not be usable within a physical session
- Moderators need to be firm but fair and may also need to coax questions out of participants
- The session itself needs to give remote participants priority over physical participants if the input is to be relevant to discussion (the natural inclination is always to prioritize those physically in the room).

- **Monthly publications**. Examples are ICANN's monthly magazine, the policy update, the compliance newsletter, and others.

  These are extremely useful reference documents that help inform the community plus help new participants get up to speed and grow to understand ICANN and its processes at their own pace. However, there are several mistakes consistently made with periodical publications:

  - They become dull. Over time, a formula is developed and without active interaction and feedback from recipients, the production of the publication becomes a chore and the content suffers as a result. To remain relevant and interesting, it is highly recommended that professional content providers and writers are used.

  - They become incomprehensible. The very success of a publication can cause its authors to worry too much about subsequent content – to the extent that the very approach that made the publication interesting is lost amid concern that it will be not be entirely accurate. ICANNese rapidly enters publications, causing everyone but those who already know the details to switch off.

- Authors underestimate the time it takes to produce a regular publication. Content is put off until the last minute, and then deadlines slip. Eventually production becomes a chore and the level of energy within the publication begins to die, causing readers to give up.

- The solution in each of these cases is to have professional writers produce the material for quick review by experts.

- **Meeting websites**. Each meeting since Sao Paulo has had its own dedicated website, providing information about all the sessions as well as information about the local area and venue, as well as specific sections for photographs, videos, and so on.

  While these websites remain very useful, they need to be reviewed and refitted to fit the needs of attendees. The provision of a simple and easy to understand schedule remains a hurdle not yet jumped. Likewise, session pages remains confusingly laid out, text-heavy and difficult to interpret, resulting in far lower viewers that would be expected. The goal of the sites remains good but they need an overhaul to make them more user-friendly and intuitive.

  RECOMMENDATION SEVEN: That a review of meeting websites is carried out within the first six months of 2010, alongside a broader review and revamp of ICANN's current web offerings.

- **Webcast/audiocasts**. Despite significant improvement in recent years in the quality of webcasts and audiocasts, the technologies remain dependent on a large range of factors – most significantly, bandwidth – to work properly.

  The existence of a video feed makes people feel more engaged with events, although in reality it serves little real practical function. Most effective by far has been the incorporation of a number of different participative elements in one window: Adobe Connect for example enables a video feed, an audio feed, a chatroom, a question box and the ability to show the presenter's slides.

  This combined ability provides enough of an experience for people to engage with events and they feel more than passive followers – the value of this cannot be underestimated. However, without clearly defined ways to interact with the physical room, it can still be a frustrating experience. Again, only if priority is given to remote participants can those participants interact effectively.

Rather than tackle the failings in social and cultural norms – how to pull in remote participation within a physical room – focus typically gravitates toward a vague effort to find a "better" technological solution. My advice would be for ICANN to focus more on making the most of existing tools at this stage rather than seek more advanced or complex tools. The social rules are already behind the technology in this sense.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT: That ICANN stick with the current technological tools and focus its energies on creating guidelines and rules for the effective use of such tools before moving forward.

The five "rules" of effective remote participation

- There has to be a dedicated person in charge of engaging with remote participants in each session, who explains the situation surrounding engagement. That person needs to be given equal importance to physical attendees i.e. sat on stage and entitled to interrupt.

- Remote participants should be given priority over physical attendees since there are unable to adapt as quickly to real world discussions and so their input loses relevance faster.

- The more participative approaches there are, and the easier they are to find and access, the greater the effective participation. Particularly useful is a single space where video, audio, chat, questions and presentations can be presented.

- The earlier you can advertise participation tools, their location, and the way they will be used, the more effective subsequent participation will be.

- If someone is presenting or commenting remotely using their voice, it is crucial that the sound quality of that input within the room itself is very high. Otherwise, combined with the lack of physical presence, the impact of that participation will be low at best.

Further possible improvements:

- The default design of session rooms at ICANN meetings – the classroom style with a panel on stage giving presentations – remains the least effective design possible to encourage active or constructive engagement with a room.

- The introduction of moderators/facilitators within physical meetings, where the facilitator keeps up the pace of discussion and challenges participants to answer others' questions is a much more engaging and effective of making progress on issues than the drawn-out and disconnected discussions that typify many ICANN meetings.

- Transcripts of sessions are hugely under-utilized by being posted as separate, simple-text files. Added to an intelligent database, the wealth of ICANN meeting discussions would be readily and easily accessible.

- Allowing more community engagement with meeting sessions – to the extent where community members could devise and execute their own meetings under certain guidelines – would lead to greater engagement and hence participation from the community.

- Allowing remote participants to be given the ability to talk to a room over the public address system gives a real sense of engagements but does require careful testing off-stage in order to prevent the flow being disrupted.

What others are doing:

There are two main comparable organizations to ICANN that also seek to engage remote participants: the IETF and the IGF.

Of them, ICANN is still out ahead, albeit marginally in the case of the recent Internet Governance Forum in Egypt.

The IETF for example, offers:

- Audio streaming of most sessions
- A "jabber" chatroom
- Presentations for download prior to sessions
- An audio archive
- Official minutes

The organization has also been experimenting with WebEx online conferencing software recently, with mixed results.

The IGF on the other hand based itself initially on ICANN's meeting setup (I provided some help and advice) and includes:

- Live interpretation of main sessions
- Live audio feed of main rooms in 5 UN languages
- Live (in room and online) and archived scribing of sessions
- WebEx chatrooms with facility to raise questions in the room
- Official minutes of each day and an overall summary of the meeting
- A live video feed, with multiple camera angles for the main rooms

With the exception of the IGF live video feed – which was provided at great expense by the Egyptian government (at least 10 television cameras mounted on blocks and a full time production staff working separately to the IGF secretariat), ICANN provides a greater degree of remote participation, including:

- Live and recorded interpretation of all main sessions
- Live audio feed of main sessions in multiple languages (typically three)
- Live (in room and online) and archived scribing of sessions
- A dedicated meeting website with Twitter feed
- A mobile version of the meeting site for phones
- A final briefing note covering the conference overall
- An online question box for questions to the Board
- Chatrooms for all sessions
- A combined video, audio, presentation, chat and question box within one window for the main sessions and ccNSO sessions (expandable to other rooms with the purchase of additional equipment)
- Archived video of sessions

One area where the IGF excelled recently was in the ability to switch between different rooms at the click of a button, and bring up the audio and video of each room, combined with a fast archival system that enabled you to embed the videos into your own pages.

ICANN has still to make the archive of video complete or fast – causing gaps and long time delays. And the quality of the video archives vary widely (the export function of Adobe Connect has flaws).

The IGF saw few entrants to its WebEx chatrooms, mostly because it required visiting a different URL to the video, plus entering a password. These two steps prevented most from being able to find, or bothering to find, the chatroom locations. In that sense, ICANN's hyperlinked schedule works better, although it is clearly still open for significant improvement.

The IGF has also experimented with so-called "hubs" – where interested communities from around the world came together in a local spot to view the IGF meeting live and then discuss ideas with one another. The idea is that the speeches given at the IGF encourage wider awareness and debate locally.

The hub idea has grown in scope, although it remains run by self-organizing volunteers and its uncertain yet whether the idea will continue to grow and in what direction. It is, however, a good example of how other organizations continue to innovate in order to allow for greater interaction and engagement.

In conclusion, ICANN has make significant strides in improving public participation in the past few years. However, there remains a number of barriers – most of them cultural – to full and effective participation.

In many respects, there is nothing technological that prevents people from getting engaged with ICANN. It is now the case that ICANN needs to look at itself and its own practices in order to make the most effective use of existing tools.