ICANN | GAC

Governmental Advisory Committee

Prague, Czech Republic, 16 June 2025

GAC Communiqué – Prague, Czech Republic[1]

The Prague Communiqué was drafted and agreed in a hybrid setting, during the ICANN83 Policy Forum, with some GAC participants in Prague, Czech Republic, and others remotely. The GAC's discussions during this public meeting are reflected in the GAC Meeting Minutes and the transcripts of all sessions, available at https://gac.icann.org/meetings-records/. The Communiqué was circulated to the GAC immediately after the meeting to provide an opportunity for all GAC Members and Observers to consider it before publication, bearing in mind the special circumstances of a hybrid meeting. No objections were raised during the agreed timeframe before publication.

I. Introduction

The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) met in Prague, Czech Republic, in a hybrid setting including remote participation, from 9 to 12 June 2025.

Eighty (80) GAC Members and nine (9) Observers attended the meeting.

The GAC meeting was conducted as part of the ICANN83 Policy Forum. All GAC plenary and working group sessions were conducted as open meetings.

The Governmental Advisory Committee mourns the loss of Nigel Hickson, an outstanding champion of a free, open and secure Internet, and an ardent contributor to the multi-stakeholder governance of the Internet. Nigel was highly esteemed in the ICANN community and the wider Internet Governance ecosystem, beloved among his GAC colleagues and his counterparts in many governments and international fora, to whom he was an influential expert, a thoughtful leader, a deeply caring mentor and a dear friend. Nigel Hickson will be remembered as a remarkable and genuine man, a role model whose intelligence, dedication, humility, kindness and humour have left an indelible mark on the GAC and ICANN, in the service of the global public interest.

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[1] To access previous GAC Advice, whether on the same or other topics, past GAC communiqués are available at: https://gac.icann.org/

II. Inter-Constituency Activities and Community Engagement

Meeting with the ICANN Board

The GAC met with the ICANN Board and discussed:
- ICANN Policy Development
- Accuracy of Domain Registration Data
- Privacy and Proxy Services Accreditation
- Community Statements of Interest
- Deferral of the Accountability and Transparency Review (ATRT4)

Meeting with the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)

The GAC met with members of the ALAC and discussed:

- Applicant Support Program (ASP) and Equity in the Next Round of New gTLDs
- Public Interest Frameworks and the Role of ICANN Advisory Committees

Meeting with the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO)

The GAC met with members of the GNSO Council and discussed:
- Accuracy of Domain Registration Data
- DNS Abuse Mitigation
- Registration Data Request Service (RDRS)
- Urgent Requests for Disclosure of Registration Data and Law Enforcement Requestors Authentication

Meeting with the Address Supporting Organization (ASO)

The GAC met with members of the ASO and discussed:
- Public Comments on the Governance Document for the Recognition, Maintenance and Derecognition of Regional Internet Registries
- Feedback and Participation from Regional Engagements
- Next Steps and Expected Timeline to finalize the new Governance Document

Meeting with the Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC)

The GAC met with members of the SSAC and discussed:
- Access to Registration Data
- Free and Open-Source Software
- DNS Blocking

Cross Community Discussions

GAC Members participated in relevant cross-community sessions scheduled as part of ICANN83, including regarding the WSIS+20 Review, and ongoing discussion of the ICANN Public Meetings Strategy (How We Meet Discussion Group).

III.   Internal Matters

1. GAC Membership

There are currently 184 GAC Member States and Territories and 40 Observer Organizations.

2. GAC Elections

The 2025 election process for GAC Vice-Chairs will be initiated shortly after the ICANN83 meeting. The initial nomination period will close on 10 September 2025. If needed, a balloting process will be conducted from 3 October until 27 October 2025 (concluding during the ICANN84 public meeting), after which time the election results will be announced.

3. GAC Working Groups

- **GAC Public Safety Working Group (PSWG)**

The GAC PSWG continued its work to advocate for improved measures to combat DNS Abuse and promote lawful, effective access to domain name registration data. In the weeks prior to ICANN83, the PSWG met with multiple ICANN stakeholder groups to discuss topics of mutual interest. The PSWG contributed to the GAC discussions on DNS Abuse Mitigation and on WHOIS and Registration Data Issues, which highlighted several aspects of the PSWG's ongoing work. Key takeaways involving PSWG workstreams included potential topics for narrowly scoped Policy Development Processes (PDPs) to address DNS abuse, law enforcement authentication, the next steps regarding the Registration Data Request Service (RDRS) and continued progress on work related to "Urgent Requests" for disclosure of registration data.

4. GAC Operational Matters

Pursuant to GAC Operating Principle 53, GAC Members finalized revisions to the GAC Operating Principles regarding the timing of annual committee leadership elections and the terms of the GAC Chair and the GAC Vice Chairs. GAC members in attendance agreed to revise GAC Operating Principle 31 to adjust the committee's annual election cycle to conclude during the second meeting of the calendar year. This revision will enable leadership transitions to take place at the end of the ICANN Annual General Meeting when the ICANN Board and other ICANN communities also begin their leadership terms. GAC Members in attendance also agreed to revise GAC Operating Principle 21 to adjust the term limit of the GAC Chair to three consecutive terms of two years and the term limits of the GAC Vice-Chairs to two consecutive terms of two years.

5. GAC Strategic Planning

The GAC Leadership reported on its ongoing work with GAC Topic Leads to develop the next GAC Annual Plan 2025/2026 and reviewed expected updates to some of the GAC Strategic Objectives and various Expected Outcomes.

A draft of the next GAC Annual Plan is expected to be shared after ICANN83 for GAC Members' consideration and input, with a view to endorse the plan during ICANN84.

6. Capacity Development

The ICANN83 GAC Capacity Development session focused on the New gTLD Program Next Round Applicant Guidebook and particularly on matters of GAC interest related to the applicant journey, community input, objections and appeals, contention resolution, and application evaluation. The very engaging and well attended session was instrumental in preparing for the productive GAC plenary discussions that followed on the next round of New gTLDs.

The GAC thanks the ICANN org Next Round team for facilitating the Capacity Development session. The GAC Leadership and Underserved Regions Working Group (USRWG) co-chairs will assess the results from the post session survey and will work with the USRWG to continue delivering capacity development opportunities for GAC Members. In that context, the GAC also learned about regional capacity development activities that are taking place in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, and agreed to encourage similar activities in other regions.

IV. Issues of Importance to the GAC

1. Domain Name Registration Data

a. Registration Data Request Service (RDRS)

The GAC looks forward to reviewing the draft final report of the RDRS Standing Committee foreseen to be ready in August 2025. The GAC expresses its concerns regarding the reduced use of the tool in light of the departure of certain registrars from the pilot and reiterates its recommendation that RDRS participation should be made mandatory for all gTLD registrars to increase its utility. The GAC also welcomes the increased use of the tool by law enforcement requestors as per the latest metrics report of May 2025 and renews its call for the RDRS to continue operating beyond its pilot period and for enhancements to be made to the RDRS as previously identified by both the ICANN Board and the GAC, including improved integration for requests related to privacy and proxy services. To that end, the GAC welcomes the Board's comment during ICANN83 that ICANN is developing an analysis of which envisioned enhancements to the RDRS would require new policy development and which ones could be completed based on existing recommendations or policies. The GAC looks forward to ICANN completing this review and sharing it with the community as soon as possible, as the GAC expects it will be useful in outlining possible next steps.

Further, the GAC notes that work on authentication solutions for law enforcement requestors is proceeding in the Urgent Requests work track. The GAC reiterates that one important enhancement to the RDRS would be to ensure it can incorporate these future authentication solutions. Promoting awareness and education regarding the RDRS should also remain an important priority. To that end, it may be warranted to contemplate policy requiring links to RDRS (or successor systems) from Registration Data Directory Services that Contracted Parties are required to provide. The GAC further emphasizes the need to improve the RDRS platform's usability, particularly for small actors and first-time requesters, through user interface enhancements and clearer guidance for users.

b. Urgent Requests for Disclosure of Registration Data

The GAC appreciates recent progress made in the two parallel tracks of work regarding Urgent Requests for disclosure of domain name registration data. In the authentication track, the GAC supports the ongoing efforts of the PSWG to develop technical mechanisms to authenticate the identities of law enforcement requestors submitting Urgent Requests. The GAC appreciates the participation of ICANN community members in the Practitioners Group established by the PSWG to work on this issue, as well as the ongoing collaboration with ICANN staff whose expertise has been invaluable in the exploration of potential solutions.

In the policy track, the GAC urges rapid progress in the Registration Data Policy Implementation Review Team (IRT) discussions regarding the timeline for responses to authenticated Urgent Requests. The GAC urges the IRT to advance its discussions promptly, as the IRT has not yet resolved the timeline for responses to Urgent Requests after its three 90-minute discussions to date, including a meeting at ICANN83. The GAC reiterates its position that given the vital public safety interests related to Urgent Requests, responding to such requests within 24 hours is considered an appropriate timeline, which is also in line with ICANN's proposal for consideration by the IRT. The GAC encourages exploration of what conditions would facilitate Contracted Parties processing Urgent Requests within this timeline.

The GAC intends to continue following both work tracks. Swift progress is essential, as the GAC notes that after its Advice in the ICANN79 San Juan Communiqué issued 15 months ago, and despite the GAC's Follow-Up on Previous Advice in the ICANN80 Kigali Communiqué, the policy regarding Urgent Requests is still not in place.

c. Accuracy of Registration Data

The GAC continues to emphasize the importance of accuracy in domain registration data. The GAC remains concerned about the pause in the work of the Accuracy Scoping Team since 2022 and encourages the new GNSO Small Team on Accuracy to learn from the previous scoping experience. At the same time, the GAC welcomes the separate preliminary ideas shared during ICANN83 by the GNSO regarding the work of the new GNSO Small Team covering possible next steps on accuracy, based on responses given by the GAC and other community members to the GNSO's recent threshold questions. In particular, the GAC notes with interest the idea to investigate shortening the timeline for registrars to perform registration data validation and verification. The current timeline under the Registrar Accreditation Agreement is 15 days. However, presenters during the ICANN83 briefing on DNS Abuse observed that attempts to mitigate phishing attacks require swift action because cybercriminals often register many new domains in just a few hours, exploit them, profit from abusive activities, and abandon those domains within just a few days. This is increasingly exacerbated by the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as discussed by the presenters.

The GAC looks forward to receiving information about the final recommendations made by the GNSO Small Team and any other possible next steps on accuracy. In addition, the GAC noted the explanations provided by the Board during ICANN83 regarding accuracy-related requirements in ICANN's contracts and looks forward to additional details, as discussed in the session, regarding how ICANN ensures compliance with the full set of accuracy requirements. The GAC also welcomes further information from Contracted Parties on their practices related to accuracy. The GAC notes that receiving further details and clarifications to address questions from GAC members would be helpful to inform continued discussions within the GAC.

2. DNS Abuse

DNS Abuse remains a significant concern for governments involved in ICANN. The GAC welcomed last year's contract amendments establishing obligations for Contracted Parties to mitigate and disrupt DNS Abuse, as a first step. Further work is necessary, however, to stem the increasing cost to the public of phishing, malware, botnets, and other forms of DNS Abuse.

During the ICANN83 DNS Abuse session, the GAC appreciated learning about the anti-abuse practices from the local host country code top-level domain (ccTLD) – cz.nic - and the latest analysis and findings in the Phishing Landscape 2024 report by Interisle. These interventions underscored the vast scale of phishing campaigns, the substantial costs imposed on society, and the critical importance of proactive DNS Abuse prevention and mitigation. The rapid weaponization of domain names used for phishing campaigns makes swift action essential. The GAC continuously explores a wide range of options, including proactive practices, collaboration within the broader ecosystem, requirements for registrants offering subdomain services, as well as links between addressing DNS Abuse and work on domain name registration data.

The GAC is pleased that several community stakeholder groups share its view that more work is needed to address DNS Abuse. Continued efforts are necessary, and the upcoming new round of generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) set to open next year, underscores the urgency to act swiftly.

In particular, the GAC has discussed, both before and during ICANN83, several proposals for further policy work. These discussions involved representatives from the Net Beacon Institute, which recently issued a White Paper proposing different PDPs to address DNS Abuse, and the Contracted Parties House. It is encouraging to see that the GNSO Small Team on DNS Abuse plans to deliver its recommendations on this topic before the next ICANN meeting. The GAC believes that the full spectrum of ideas so far discussed—including both proactive and reactive measures—deserves attention. The discussion has included specific issue areas, such as associated domain checking, bulk registrations, gating Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), investigating subdomains, public reporting of abuse statistics, the relationship between the timeliness of registration data verification and DNS Abuse, and transparency reporting obligations. Given the time constraints leading up to the next application round for New gTLDs, the GAC recommends prioritizing specific topics, as outlined in the GAC's ICANN83 advice.

3. Next Round of New gTLDs

a. Implementation Review Team (IRT)

The GAC noted the submission by the IRT of the complete draft of the Applicant Guidebook for Public Comment. The GAC recognized the tremendous efforts of the IRT in the delivery of this milestone in preparation for the Next Round of New gTLDs, and thanked the GAC's IRT representatives for their participation in this critical work.

b. Applicant Support Program (ASP)

The GAC recalled the agreed compromise[2] between the GAC and the Board which resulted from the GAC-Board Bylaws Consultation on the ICANN80 GAC Advice[3], including the Board's agreement to conduct a review at the halfway mark of successful Applicant Support Program (ASP) applications. The GAC recalled the Board's agreement to direct ICANN org to share results of geographic distribution of ASP applications with the IRT after 20 qualified ASP applicants to determine:

- any need for adjustments to Communications, Outreach & Engagement to target applications from underserved regions including developing countries, and
- if additional funding would be required if the number of approved applications exceeds the budgeted amount of 40-45.

The GAC recalls that country-level statistics can be made available by the relevant ICANN Government Stakeholder Engagement team if requested by a GAC member in their region. The GAC notes that this data will only be shared with the consent of applicants so that the relevant government can assist with targeted outreach and support.

The GAC noted the current statistics presented by ICANN org on the status of ASP applications in process and, in particular, the very small number of completed applications submitted, given that there are only about 5 months left in the 12-month ASP application window. Furthermore, the GAC notes concern that the current process may not reach potential applicants who are least connected to ICANN's processes. The GAC expressed concern that with the current pace of applications there may be no opportunity to conduct a review or determine any adjustments to the current Communications, Outreach & Engagement plan before the ASP application deadline. This review could identify:

- the obstacles preventing applications from moving forward more rapidly, and recommend appropriate mitigation activities;
- draft applications that may not be completed before the deadline, and
- targeted improvements to ensure the ASP achieves its inclusive purpose.

The GAC is therefore of the view that such a review should now be conducted immediately, rather than after 20 qualified applications, in order to provide sufficient time for any project implementation course corrections, including Communications, Outreach & Engagement adjustments necessary to maximize the number of ASP applications completed and submitted for evaluation before the deadline.

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[2] GAC Response to Board Update following Board-GAC Bylaws Consultation on ICANN80 GAC Advice (16 October 2024): https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/gac-response-update-following-board-gac-bylaws-consultation-on-icann80-gac-advice

[3] GAC-Board Consultation Call on ICANN80 Advice (16 September 2024): https://gac.icann.org/sessions/gac-and-icann-board-consultation-call-on-icann80-advice-asp

c. GAC Readiness

GAC members highlight the importance of GAC readiness in preparation for the Next Round of New gTLDs, notably regarding opportunities for GAC interventions after the "reveal day" of string applications. GAC volunteers are encouraged to collaborate with GAC topic leads to monitor timelines and milestones related to the next round applications process, including actively preparing for GAC Early Warnings, GAC Advice and other opportunities for input to applicants, the ICANN Board, and ICANN org.

Some concerns were expressed within the GAC about potential increased spam and abuse in connection to the expansion of the DNS. It was suggested that the GAC consider, in advance of evaluating applications, how the Committee should approach discussions on Early Warnings and other instruments at its disposal in order to protect the public interest.

4. Governance of the Regional Internet Registries

The GAC appreciates the ASO for providing an overview of the feedback received on the efforts to review and revise the RIR Governance document, currently in place as Internet Coordination Policy Two (ICP-2). Discussion covered common issues received during the public consultation period. Reflecting on the draft document that was subject to Public Comment, the GAC notes that it would appreciate more background on the rationale behind a number of changes that were introduced in this document. For the upcoming version, the GAC asked for a redline version, with brief rationale on feedback that was not accommodated. Additionally, a number of members asked for more information on the expected implementation and timelines to operationalize the outcomes. As an issue of importance, the GAC remains committed to provide the ASO with the necessary feedback in intersessional work and is looking forward to a broader community discussion during the ICANN84 meeting on the new revision of the draft RIR Governance document. A useful reference in terms of multistakeholder process are the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines, which could be considered by the ASO going forward.

5. Community Statements of Interest (SOI)

The GAC acknowledges the latest Public Comment opportunity shared by ICANN seeking comment on an updated version of the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct Concerning Statements of Interest. The GAC appreciates the continuing progress on this matter by the Board and staff, and reinforces the importance of concluding the effort by the end of this calendar year at the latest. The GAC welcomes the Board's affirmation in its meeting with the GAC during ICANN83, that the updated Draft Code of Conduct would not expand existing disclosure requirements for GAC representatives.

6. Deferral of the Fourth ICANN Accountability and Transparency Review (ATRT4)

The GAC notes the intended deferral of the ATRT4 review process, as well as the decisions adopted by the Board recently on other accountability mechanisms as explained in the 27 May letter from the Board Chair to the GAC Chair[4]. In this regard, the GAC recalls the essential character of the ATRT reviews as mandated by the Bylaws and their central role for the well-functioning of ICANN's multistakeholder accountability, transparency, and governance. Accordingly, the GAC calls on the Board to expedite consultations on the matter with the multistakeholder community, with a view to finding a common ground approach for a way forward respectful of Bylaws obligations as soon as possible.

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[4] ICANN Board Chair letter to SO/AC Chairs - 27 May 2025:
https://gac.icann.org/advice/correspondence/incoming/20250527/update-on-icann-reviews

V. GAC Consensus Advice to ICANN Board

The following items of advice from the GAC to the Board have been reached on the basis of consensus as defined in the ICANN Bylaws[5]:

1. Policy Development Related to DNS Abuse

a. The GAC advises the Board:

      i.   To urge the GNSO Council to undertake all necessary preparations prior to ICANN84 towards starting targeted and narrowly scoped Policy Development Processes (PDPs) on DNS Abuse issues, prioritizing bulk registration of malicious domain names and the responsibility of registrars to investigate domains associated with registrant accounts that are the subject of actionable reports of DNS Abuse.

RATIONALE

Before new strings are added to the DNS as a result of the next round, further work on DNS Abuse is needed to stem the increasing cost to the public of phishing, malware, botnets, and other forms of DNS abuse. Furthermore, the GAC encourages PDPs that are targeted and clearly scoped to achieve results according to shorter timelines.

The GAC appreciates the wealth of proposals for further policy work recently expressed by different parts of the community and maintains they all deserve attention. The GAC supports multistakeholder action to achieve Consensus Policy outcomes and encourages, for the time being, prioritization of specific issues such as malicious use of bulk registrations.

Given this timeline, the GAC encourages progress on commencing narrowly-scoped PDPs between ICANN83 and ICANN84.

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[5]   Bylaws section.12.2.(a)(x) The advice of the Governmental Advisory Committee on public policy matters shall be duly taken into account, both in the formulation and adoption of policies. In the event that the Board determines to take an action that is not consistent with Governmental Advisory Committee advice, it shall so inform the Governmental Advisory Committee and state the reasons why it decided not to follow that advice. Any Governmental Advisory Committee advice approved by a full Governmental Advisory Committee consensus, understood to mean the practice of adopting decisions by general agreement in the absence of any formal objection ("GAC Consensus Advice"), may only be rejected by a vote of no less than 60% of the Board, and the Governmental Advisory Committee and the Board will then try, in good faith and in a timely and efficient manner, to find a mutually acceptable solution. The Governmental Advisory Committee will state whether any advice it gives to the Board is GAC Consensus Advice.

VI. Next Meeting

The GAC is scheduled to meet next during the ICANN84 Annual General Meeting in Muscat, Oman on 25-30 October 2025.