Candidate Statement for the position of GNSO Council Chair

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Candidate name: Stéphane Van Gelder

Country of origin: France

Dear GNSO Councillors,

It is a deep honour to be nominated for a second term as GNSO Council Chair. The following is my candidacy statement.

Let me start by highlighting the fact that we are all very busy. This is a recurring theme on the Council. This past year, we've faced huge challenges in dealing with our workload. These challenges will continue as we move into 2012 and ICANN launches the new gTLD program.

So because I know we all have too little time, I will keep this statement short and do my best not to add to the already crazy amount of reports/documents/statements that we all have to read. Also, as our Dakar agenda includes a "question time" session for the Chair elections, if anyone has any questions I will be happy to answer them during that session or at any other time.

What is the Chair's role?

When I took over as GNSO Council Chair at the end of 2010, having served as Vice-Chair of the Contracted Parties House the previous year, I saw one overriding requirement to being an efficient Chair: neutrality.

Over the past year, neutrality has been the goal I have constantly aimed for. I am convinced that the current bicameral structure of our Council can only function properly if the Chair is neutral, and working hand in hand with the Vice Chairs of each house.

Their job, of course, is not neutrality. It is to be spokespersons for their respective houses. The Chair must provide Council-wide leadership, the Vice Chairs make sure that their house's perspective is taken into account. I have been privileged this past year to work with **Mary Wong** serving as Vice Chair of the Non Contracted Parties House and **Jeff Neuman** serving as Vice Chair of the Contracted Parties House, and they have done exactly that.

They have championed issues that are important to their houses. That is not the Chair's job. In fact, as Chair, I don't care about the issues the GNSO Council is looking at! That is your job, as Councillors and representatives of your respective groups. The Chair's job is to make sure the Council runs smoothly. That is what I have set about doing this past year.

Dealing with the workload

Managing our work, coping with the load, prioritising our tasks... this then continues to be one of the major challenges facing the GNSO Council. All through 2011, you've seen and heard me take the bull by the horns on this.

The GNSO is one of ICANN's busiest organisations. The Council must therefore tackle its workload issues head-on. We have worked hard on this. Some of our achievements this past year include:

- A regular agenda item on our meeting agenda to review the GNSO's current Pending Projects list and remind ourselves of ongoing projects.
- Working with the GNSO's excellent support staff to identify those projects that could be completed in a timely manner, and making sure they are.
- A trusted and effective collaboration with the GNSO Council's Secretariat, **Glen de Saint Géry**, to ensure that all administrative aspects of our meetings, email lists and websites are as useful to the Council as possible.
- Work has begun on refining the Council's Open Meetings to ensure maximum efficiency and community participation.

One crucial milestone was reached this year: the completion of most of the GNSO restructure work that has been a drain on the GNSO's resources for years. The two steering committees set-up to carry this project, the **Operations Steering Committee** and the **Policy Process Steering Committee**, have required hours and hours of volunteer time and effort. Staff has also been stretched very thin dealing with this.

Today, the Council has more refined procedures and clearer rules. The two SCs and their many supporting groups have looked in detail at the way the GNSO Council should work. Even though some improvements work remains, the end result is a Council that is better prepared to meet the challenges ahead.

Looking to the future

2012 is going to be a unique year for both ICANN and the GNSO. When the new gTLD program launches on January 12, 2012, one of the GNSO's major policy developments will go live.

The GNSO will undoubtedly continue to be heavily involved in the program. Already, we have been called upon to deal with issues stemming from the program such as needy applicant support and protection for Red Cross and Olympic Committee names. We can certainly expect more work of this kind to be sent to us this year.

On another note, we are welcoming a new constituency and new Councillors, saying goodbye to some of its most experienced members, and continue to look at how to best work with other ICANN SOs and ACs.

By managing our workload efficiently, playing on the strengths of our new two-house structure and the fact that we now have more experience of that structure... and by working with other ICANN structures to help deal with issues in a more complete way

when needed, the GNSO will remain one of the most prominent organisations within ICANN.

And within that organisation, the Council will continue to hold its managerial role. Despite what we are sometimes told, the Council does matter. It is the only place where ICANN's most diverse organisation - the one that brings together a great many differing interests - can have truly fair representation and discussion.

The GNSO Council is made up of representatives of all the GNSO groups. On the Council, these groups can debate, discuss, agree and disagree. But in the end, what we are doing is all working together towards one common goal: serving the generic Top Level Domain community.

It is a goal I have been proud to defend as Chair in 2011. If the Council is so willing, I will commit to doing so again for one last year in 2012. Whatever happens, I will leave the Council at the end of next year with a great feeling of pride in what we, as a collective of very diverse individuals, have achieved.

Stéphane Van Gelder