

## **Registrar Constituency Position re ICANN Meetings Reform**

**July 1, 2008**

### **BACKGROUND**

In June 2008, the Registrar Constituency (“RC”) was asked to provide comments regarding ICANN’s Meetings Reform Paper (“Meetings Reform”). During the three weeks subsequent to ICANN’s request for comments the members of the RC shared their feedback about this matter by e-mail and in person at the Paris ICANN meeting. Accordingly, this Position Paper captures the overall sentiment expressed by the RC members who provided feedback about this matter and seems to reflect the general sense of the RC. However, due to time constraints, no formal vote regarding this Position Paper was taken.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The RC strongly supports no reduction in the number or frequency of “large” ICANN meetings held per year. In short, nearly all RC members who weighed in on this subject support holding no less than three large meetings per year.<sup>1</sup>

### **DISCUSSION**

The RC is concerned that reducing the number of large ICANN meetings from three per year will strain the community. With three large meetings per year, the RC already struggles to handle all of its important affairs. Reducing the number of large meetings to only two per year may cause the time pressures to become too intense, leading to poor decision making.

Although the RC supports and encourages regional meetings, these smaller meetings are no substitute for large meetings, particularly in terms of community interaction. Regional meetings, while important, are designed to attract only small segments of the community by definition. Because most issues before ICANN, and the RC in particular, are global in nature, the RC needs at least three large meetings per year to bring its worldwide membership together to make decisions.

Although the RC supports utilizing technology to encourage greater participation and to enable less costly communication, the RC urges ICANN not to underestimate the value of face-to-face interaction. Conference calls are a challenge for time-zone distant participants, and a challenge for participants from less developed voice and data regions. Furthermore, in analyzing the history of issues over the lifetime of the RC, many of the most important decisions have been made in person, at live meetings. Should the frequency of large ICANN meetings be reduced to once every six months it would be more challenging in terms of timing to schedule decision making of these complex issues

for face-to-face meetings. Because face-to-face meetings generally offer the most favorable signal-to-noise ratio, the quality of the policy input from the RC about these complex issues would likely diminish.

In terms of location for the large meetings, the RC members who weighed in on this related issue prefer that at least one of the three large meetings always be at the same travel hub location.<sup>ii</sup> By maintaining a “permanent” location for one meeting per year, efficiencies could be gained; perhaps a partnership may even be formed with the host city leading to a possible reduction in fees for the assurance of several years of return visits by the ICANN community.

For the other large ICANN meetings the RC generally supports continent rotation, which decreases the travel burden on everyone in the community at least once every few meetings.

## **CONCLUSION**

The RC strongly supports no reduction in the number or frequency of “large” ICANN meetings held per year. The opinions expressed by the RC in this Position Paper are the opinions of the RC as a whole, and should not be interpreted to reflect the individual opinion of any particular RC member unless clearly stated.

---

<sup>i</sup> Only one RC member recommended holding less than three large meetings per year. This RC member suggested that ICANN hold only two large meetings annually. Additionally, this RC member also suggested that ICANN charge a mandatory, but nominal, admission fee to discourage people with no legitimate interest or relationship with the industry from attending ICANN events.

<sup>ii</sup> An RC member involved in academia, who can only attend one meeting per year, suggests that one large ICANN meeting be held during Northern hemisphere summer months, preferably at a travel hub location for easier travel.