ICANN REFORM – COMMENTS ON DR. LYNN’S PROPOSAL

ECOM-LAC, the Latin America and Caribbean Federation for Internet and Electronic Commerce, is pleased to submit the following comments on Dr. Lynn’s proposal for ICANN reform:

GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY:

When ICANN’s initial board was designated, geographical diversity was restricted to three continents – EUROPE, ASIA/PACIFIC and the U.S.A. ECOM-LAC was outspoken on this issue, demanding a voice for our region at this stage in the proceedings. As it happened, geographic diversity became a requirement for the permanent board, and we now have two members from our region active in the ICANN board. The Stuart Lynn proposal only specifies that geographical diversity will be a factor within five of the At Large Trustees, which means that our region will most probably end up with one representative on the Board.

AT LARGE REPRESENTATION:

The work of the ALSC, which cost a significant amount of money, and involved a sustained effort by a highly qualified group of people, should continue to be supported. At Large Board members should continue to be elected by the at-large membership, and we agree with the concept of an At Large Supporting Organization.

CCTLDS:

ECOM-LAC considers the involvement of the ccTLDs in ICANN is essential in maintaining coordination and stability of the global DNS. We agree with the idea of a ccTLD Supporting Organization with their own elected Board members.

ICANN RE-STRUCTURING:

ECOM-LAC does not agree with the proposed restructuring model, which involves reducing the ICANN board from 19 to 15 seats. On the one hand this reduces participation in the board for the current supporting organizations, and on the other limits the eventual participation of ccTLDs in the board. We also consider that the current model of Supporting Organizations is by far the best solution for policy recommendations within the ICANN.

FUNDING:

It seems evident that any private enterprise or organization would, as a matter of due course, fund itself primarily by means of it’s products or proprietary resources. Since gTLDs can be considered as an ICANN proprietary resource (registers and registrars must sign agreements with ICANN to be able to sell them to the public), it follows that these should be the primary source of funding for ICANN. Evidently, the solution would be an ICANN user fee to be paid by the registrant, say $0.50 or so per annum. For someone paying $20.00 or more for a gTLD registration, this could scarcely be a purchase deterrent. We would also stress that we disagree completely with allegations that this can be considered a tax on the Internet. Maintaining stability in the DNS (which benefits users), requires competent governance and this, in turn, must have adequate funding.
GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION:

We do not support Dr. Lynn’s proposal to involve governments at Board Level, or as sources of funding for ICANN. We feel the GAC is the forum for governments to participate in the ICANN process. At the most, the chair of the GAC should become a Board member. With regards to the discussion about the role of the ITU in a reformed ICANN, much as we have the utmost respect for the ITU and its global mission in the telecommunications environment, we feel their expertise would be an asset to the GAC, and encourage the ITU to consider participating therein.

IN CONCLUSION:

Many people and organizations in Latin America have invested time and money in contributing to the consolidation of ICANN as a bottom-up, consensus based entity, with wide geographic and stakeholder participation, and it would seem far more logical to fix whatever is proven to be wrong in ICANN, than to throw all these concerted efforts of 3 ½ years down the drain and pursue a different model. When all is said and done, at the end of the day the problem is lack of adequate funding. Solve this and ICANN can provide the staff support required to improve what has been at fault.

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