

Baher Esmat: ...manager for the Middle East. I would like to welcome all of you to this meeting today. Actually, this meeting comes in a series of meetings that we've had over the past four weeks. We've had meetings in New York, London, Hong-Kong, on consultations about what we call the new gTLD Program. The new gTLD Program is the one where ICANN is going to open the door for new domain names at the top level of the DNS system.

So today, we are here in Abu Dhabi to get the community of the Middle East to know about this program as well as the one of what we call the IDNs or Internationalized Domain Names, that is having top-level domain names in different languages. So, we want to engage the Arab community and the Middle East community in this process. We want to hear from them what they think about the process of introducing new gTLDs or IDNs.

We're going to have a number of sessions and presentations today discussing these topics. I think we are going to start with a general introduction on ICANN by Mike (1:32 Unintelligible) Gaston, so, Liz, I think you can have the floor, and then we'll move forward with the rest of the sessions.

Liz Gasster: Good morning. Thank you so much for coming this morning. My name is Liz Gasster. I am a Senior Policy Counselor with ICANN. I've been with ICANN about two years now. Prior to working at ICANN, I was with AT&T in the Public Policy and Advocacy Group, as an attorney for about 27 years. And then also, was general counsel of a small trade association in Washington, D.C. called the Cyber Security Industry Alliance, for about a year before joining ICANN. So just a little bit about me.

In terms of introducing ICANN to you this morning, we actually have quite a bit of ground to cover about what's happening at ICANN. So we very much appreciate your participation and we hope that the information we share will be useful to you. And, at least in my case, please feel free to interrupt me if you have any questions. Again, it is a lot of information.

Let me just do this before we start, ask how many of you are familiar with ICANN? Would you consider yourself very knowledgeable about ICANN? Okay, good. So we have a little bit of a variation. So, for those of you who are very familiar with ICANN, forgive some of my introductory comments, but ICANN is something that a lot of people want to learn more about and have differing ideas about what we really do. So we'll spend a little time doing that.

In terms of the goals for the day, we want to introduce ICANN to you. We have quite a bit we want to share with you. We want to introduce ICANN's

New Generic Top Level Domain Program. And I will say that we have quite a few acronyms at ICANN. So when we talk about the Generic Top Level Domain Program, we say, gTLD, the acronym. When we talk about ICANN, which actually stands for Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, we say, ICANN. And for those of us on staff, in particular, we have a tendency to use way too many acronyms. So, if I use an acronym that you are not familiar with, please feel free to interrupt me and ask me about that. We have way too many acronyms at ICANN and it can be a bit confusing.

On the New gTLD, Generic Top Level Domain Program, we particularly want to tell you about new program developments and also describe recent work on what we call the four overarching issues. When we say, overarching issues, what we're really saying is that there are four key issues that the community has been concerned about for a while and we are taking a specific approach to take a look at those four issues. So, when you hear the term, overarching, it has no special meaning other than to mean that we have defined these four issues that require further input and consultation.

We are also going to be sharing the latest on internationalized domain names, and both of those projects within ICANN, the New gTLD project and the Internationalized Domain Name Project, are in the implementation phase at ICANN. At ICANN, we do policy development work before policies are agreed on or decided, and later on today, my colleague, Marika Konings, and I will be giving you a presentation on policy development activities that we are working on. But these two issues, or these two areas, are in the implementation stage.

Now, the fact that they are in the implantation stage still allows us to receive comments from the public, and we are very much interested in receiving comments from the public about how these programs are going and any concerns that you might have about the programs, but they are in that implementation stage. And the reason why I make that distinction so clearly is that because on the policy side, the policy activities that we'll be describing later on, they are very much newer. We are in the process of forming new working groups on these new policy activities, and that provides a real opportunity for any of you who might be interested in the issues to actually get involved in how policy is developed at ICANN, and I'll spend a little more time describing those policy activities to you.

And then we do have a guest speaker, a keynote speaker I'm very excited to hear just in a few minutes, and then, also an interesting panel later in the day. So that's kind of the lineup in terms of the goals for the day.

In terms of the first part of my comments, which will focus an introduction to ICANN, what we really want to do is share with you the environment that ICANN is basically working around and in, to give you a quick update of internet users and the domain name marketplace, to talk a little bit about ICANN's structure, which can seem a little confusing, but which is designed to give the greatest opportunity for bottom-up input and consultation from the broad ICANN community to policy decisions that we're making.

To talk a little bit about participation and particularly, how all of you might participate, or other colleagues that you know who may also very much have an interest in this issues, how you could encourage them to get involved. And then we'll talk briefly about ICANN this year, in 2009, and beyond.

This chart takes us back, in a way, to prehistory, 1990 in internet terms, and it's a chart that is kind of funny and a little odd to read. But the purpose of it is to display the geographic representation of countries in terms of internet penetration. So back in 1990, you saw a great big blob that was the United States in terms of internet usage, and somewhat in Europe, but you see, essentially, the rest of the world under-represented in terms of their participation in the internet.

And if you fast forward to, in this case, 2007, almost 20 years later, you see a dramatically different picture of what the internet is about, who participates in the internet, what the issues are, even just the quantity of people who are participating in the internet going from small numbers, millions in the 1990s to tens of millions and even billions here at this time. So we've had an incredibly important change in who represents the internet in the world today, and it's very important in terms of new policies. Our new policies and the issues that we face really reflect today the global concerns of the internet community, quite different from what people might have been talking about in terms of internet priorities in 1990.

So what is ICANN? ICANN is the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. In terms of our responsibilities, we coordinate the unique identifiers of the internet, names, delegating top-level domains, which means the name of acronym that's to the right of the dot, .com, .ae, .kr, for example. And we work both with gTLD registries, registries in generic top-level domains, and we work with countries and their delegated registries for country code gTLDs.

ICANN also has responsibility for allocating IP address blocks with the regional internet registries to ISPs. And we're not going to be talking much about that process today, but I wanted to just make that a part of the

presentation and share with you that that important work also gets done and it gets done as part of our IANA function.

And then lastly, in a little-known area that ICANN also works in, ICANN maintains databases for certain parameters, technical specifications on behalf of IETF and other groups, and again, that will not be a key focus of our conversation today, but it is an important responsibility that ICANN has. So I wanted to make sure to mention that.

And then above all, for all of these areas, but particularly in the domain name space, ICANN is working to develop policies using bottom-up processes and in processes involving all stakeholders.

So just one comment on that, when we talk about these processes involving all stakeholders, it's not about what ICANN's staff is doing or the decisions that ICANN's staff is making about new policies, or that the ICANN Board of Directors is making about policies. It's really about the entire internet community, the entire ICANN community coming together and agreeing on policy changes that all of you think makes sense, supported by the ICANN staff and supported by the ICANN Board.

So we do have a key set of operating principles. One of the most important is to ensure that there is stability and security in the unique identifier system and the root management. We are also very focused on promoting competition among registrars and registries, which provides choice for registrants. In the case of registrar competition, there has already been - and there will be another chart here that really emphasizes that - some dramatic changes in how much competition there now is among registrars. And with this New gTLD Program, ICANN is hoping to create the same kind of competition, and therefore, the same kinds of benefits to consumers and to registrants, that having competition in the registrar space has already enabled.

We do have a multi-stakeholder process, a forum where many people can get together and try to work out internet policies. You can imagine that when you think about bringing lots and lots of people together who have very different perspectives, we have a new CEO, Chief Executive Officer. You may have heard Rod Bextram, who began when we were in Sydney, as CEO of the company, and he made a very interesting comment that I'll just repeat briefly here. He made a point of saying that when people think about this multi-stakeholder model with all these people coming with very different opinions and ways of expressing themselves, that it sounds to many like a cacophony of noise. But in fact, what Rod hears in this noise is a symphony, that people coming together to really try to find commonality and develop

solutions that meet everyone's needs through this bottom-up process, rather than having a staff or a board dictate what ought to be done; a very important change in the way of approaching ICANN policymaking.

So we do have some key actors in the domain name marketplace, and this may be familiar, again, to some of you, but the terminology can get a little bit confusing, so we talk about registries. And the simplest way, I think, to think about registries is that they are really providing the central database for all names in their top-level domain, and are essentially the wholesaler for those names, as distinct from registrars who are the retail arms who are offering names to the public, and to ISPs and to large businesses, and who are really dealing with the registration of new domain names at the registrant level.

And many registrars offer many other services besides registration services or generic registries for gTLD registries. All registrars are accredited by ICANN and there are over 900 registrars at this time across the world. The one name that's kind of missing from this chart is it doesn't actually say registrants. You'll see this chart a little later where we do have the registrants, but I wanted to emphasize that registrants are also a key part of this community and we think very much about what the concerns of registrants are, and we very much encourage in our working groups and policy development activities to have registrants of all sizes, meaning business registrants, non-commercial registrants, individual registrants,, providing their input and their concerns about the needs of registrants as policies change.

So I would like to give you just a very short snapshot of the domain name marketplace, and this is not a particularly easy chart, I think, to see on the screen. But I'll just point out a couple of trends that I think are useful. One is just to note that there are more than 183,000,000 domain names registered globally today. And while you see that about 80,000,000 names are, in fact, registered in the .com, and .com is still very much the largest, some other trends that you'll note is that actually the ccTLD registrations, registrations occurring in Country Code Top Level Domains is, in fact, increasing. And I think the other thing that is noticeable as you see these trends in the domain name marketplace is that people, over time, are starting to really identify top-level domains with cultural, geographic and linguistic context or understanding. So, over time, Country Codes reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of the countries that are represented there.

Other generic top-level names are increasingly being associated with the communities that they intend to serve. So, a .museum or a .pro or a .org has very specific communities that they are targeting, and increasingly, we as registrants, think of them that way too. I think this is an important concept,

when you think about new gTLDs and how the community at large might think about gTLDs as being useful or instructive in the same sort of way where new gTLDs, depending on the name, could convey very specifically other cultural or ethnic or political or geographic communities that are very helpful for people who are looking to do business or to interact in certain forms that makes sense to them. So I think that's another important takeaway from this little snapshot of the Domain Name marketplace.

This chart really looks at what's happened with the registrar marketplace specifically. I think it focuses on .com registrations, but the intent of what it's really showing is that as the number of registrars increases dramatically in the world, the price of a registration has decreased dramatically. So perhaps going from something like \$50.00 U.S. to register a domain name in the earlier time, we might be seeing registrations for less than \$10.00 U.S. today. That is directly commensurate with the increase in the numbers of registrars that are offering services and convey some of the benefits that competition brings in lower prices and many more choices for consumers.

One thing that people often ask about the internet is who really runs the internet? And the interesting thing is that it's many groups and organizations that run the internet. This chart lists some of the key organizations that participate in the running of the internet, but there's no single organization that we can point to that says this entity is responsible for all of the internet.

And I believe that it's actually the internet's strength that that's the case. That many of these groups have specific responsibilities for focusing on certain aspects of the internet, and the net result of that is a very distributed governance or management or coordination function for the internet, more broadly, with no single entity having responsibility for regulating the whole internet.

And when we think about ICANN's role specifically, we actually have a fairly narrow set of responsibilities in terms of coordinating the unique identifier system of the internet, not the internet more broadly. And in fact, these groups of organizations are really just a subset of the partners that we routinely work with in trying to promote policies that are best for the internet very broadly. So it's this very distributed kind of notion about who runs the internet and the importance of multiple players with expertise in multiple areas coming together, using their expertise, sharing their expertise, and trying to come up with effective solutions to deal with concerns that affect many parties within the internet.

This slide is a bit complex and looks at the ICANN community, and I won't try to describe the whole part of this, but there are a couple of things that I think

are useful to point out. First of all, at the far right hand side, you'll see the Governmental Advisory Committee. There are over 80 governments who participate now in the Governmental Advisory Committee, which advises the ICANN Board on issues of concern to governments. These are actively participating government officials who come regularly to our three public ICANN meetings a year and who have really made the commitment to get involved themselves in understanding key policies that affect the internet from the perspective of their government. So that's a very positive thing to see the Governmental Advisory Group grow and to see more and more countries represented, and that's clearly going to be a goal on an ongoing basis to increase that number.

I'd also like to draw your attention - well, first of all you'll see the ICANN staff over on this left hand side. It says, L.A., Los Angeles, Brussels, D.C. and Sydney. Those are the key offices where ICANN personnel are located today, although many of us work remotely from around the world. So we do have those four offices and then quite a bit of what we call a virtual work staff as well.

But I just want to reiterate again that that is not where the action is happening at ICANN. The staff is there and the Board is there to support the community work. What's really important is having the community participation in what the decisions are and the outcomes are for policy changes. And so, one of the goals that we have with this event here is to encourage all of you and your other colleagues to become more involved in ICANN policymaking, and certainly, to recognize that it's not ICANN's staff making unilateral decisions about what we think new policies ought to be. We're very much reliant on the expertise and creative thinking of the community broadly in doing that.

The last thing I'll do before leaving this chart is to draw your attention to the three boxes on the lower left. The Address Supporting Organization - if you can hopefully see that - the Generic Name Supporting Organization and the Country Code Name Supporting Organization. These are the three organizations within ICANN that develop policy in those three areas. So, there is a Council of Addressing Support Council Members, same for the Generic Name Supporting Organization, and also for the Country Code Name Supporting Organization.

This is where new policy development gets made. And for me personally, I'm pretty much dedicated to working on supporting the GNSO on related policy development issues. My colleague who is here today, Marika Konings, is also focused on the GNSO. We'll talk a little bit more about that shortly. Although all of these supporting organizations are very important to

ICANN, it's the Generic Names Supporting Organization that involves the most work right now and is dealing with the biggest number of issues. So, our presentation later on the policy side will really focus a bit on those issues.

And then before I leave this slide, I also want to mention the At Large Advisory Committee at the far right bottom. That At Large Advisory Committee was set up primarily to advise ICANN's Board about concerns having to do with the at large user community. In the ICANN policy staff, we do have policy people assigned to support the ALAC and to encourage the ALAC's participation in policy development as well. When we think about the challenge of how do you get the at large community, millions of us with an interest in the internet, to have a voice, to have a way of articulating concerns that may affect users as well as registrants and others, that's something that the ALAC is uniquely focused on and candidly, an opportunity for more participation and greater insights in getting individuals worldwide involved in policy development.

So just a little more on the ICANN community; we do urge open participation when we talk about policy. All of the policy working groups are open to all participants. That was not always the case. We've done some changes to the structure of how the GNSO, the Generic Names Organization, works and we've changed some structures for how working groups should work to make it very clear that we very much want participation from virtually anyone around the world that has an interest and anything to offer on the subject that we're dealing with. So that's a very important principle. We do have diverse participants that bring expertise and useful perspectives from a lot of different venues, and again, I really encourage that.

There are issues that were really ISPs that have insights that are useful, where trademark attorneys have insights that are useful, that registrants have insights that are useful, certainly, registrars and registries who know their businesses well. Registrars have very different business models. Those business models are evolving over time. Not all registrars may view a particular issue in the same way. So this issue of getting diverse participation merely enhances the quality of the work that comes out, and so we really, really if nothing else, want to stress the opportunity for greater participation there.

We strive to make decisions on a consensus basis, and I think it's fair to mention that often, the public debate is spirited and quite blunt. It's that cacophony that some have referred to, that Rod likes to think of as more of a symphony. But certainly, it may be a surprise to some people, some cultures, just how blunt and just how outspoken people are. But just get in there, get your elbows ready, get your hands dirty, and enjoy the open

discussion, which is really a foundation for trying to come out with the right answers.

And just lastly, before I leave this slide, there are formal agreements that ICANN has with all of the generic top-level registries and with all ICANN accredited registrars that specify rules for how registrars conduct business and work with ICANN to deliver services. That's important for several reasons, but one of the most important reasons is that ICANN accredited registrars and registries essentially agree, when they sign their contracts with ICANN, that if policy changes are recommended subsequently and those policy changes are recommended in an open way, in a bottom-up process where there is consensus that is derived or achieved out of this public discussion, and the Board approves those changes, essentially the registrars and registries agree to incorporate those changes into agreements that they already have. And I think that's a fairly significant commitment on the part of registrars and registries that a willingness to consider changes to policies that exist, to keep up with marketplace concerns, they may only be addressed by making changes to registrar and registry contracts.

There might in fact be other ways to make policy changes that don't require changes to contracts. We'll talk briefly in the policy presentation about other options, developing best practices. It doesn't have to result in changes to these contracts, but this is really the primary way in which policy changes are made, and something that I think is very unique to ICANN and worth explaining right up front.

So ICANN is a global organization. I happen to be from the United States, but we have, even here at this meeting today, ICANN employees from here in the Middle East, from Cairo, from Belgium, from Brazil, from Washington, D.C. and we very much work in an environment that's completely global. So even though I happen to be American and from California, we actually have our calls at all times of the day or night to try to accommodate participation from all over the world, and it is written into our Bylaws, the global nature that we are all very committed to. So we are increasingly trying to make it easier for people around the world to participate. It's always a challenge to do well but it is a mandate that we take very seriously.

So how you can participate in ICANN. In fact, you are already participating in ICANN by joining us this morning, which we really appreciate. Your comments about pending activities, there are many opportunities to provide comments, are most welcome. We review comments that are submitted on our pending issues quite carefully and submit reports that are then examined by the public that articulate summaries of the comments that we've received. Same thing with the working groups, when we announce - I think we have

two working groups right now that we are looking for participation and your immediate participation. If you are interested, Marika will describe a little bit about some opportunities that we have right away. But really, the key here is your participation is greatly appreciated. There are many ways to submit comments, to participate in working groups, to get concerns voiced. If you're not sure about how to do that, please take my card. Take any of our staff cards that are here and we are happy to point you in directions where it would be appropriate for you to comment, and those comments mean quite a bit.

So I was going to spend a little bit of time on emerging and evolving issues. One of our core goals is to enhance the security and the stability of the internet, but it's important to note here that this is not an exclusive responsibility of ICANN. There are many players, as many of you know, that are involved in trying to deal with the safety and the security of the internet.

It was interesting. Many of you may have heard in the last couple of months about the Conficker Worm, which was a malicious code that was targeted at the domain naming system. So ICANN became very involved in trying to address concerns with the Conficker Worm, but we did so in conjunction with other organizations and governments that had their own steps involved in dealing with that. So it's rarely a unilateral action by ICANN. It's ICANN participating with groups of others who also have strong responsibilities in this area. We are committed to expanding deployment of internationalized domain names, migrating from IPV 4 to IPV 6, introduction of new generic top-level domains, which you'll hear quite a bit about, current and upcoming studies of Whois, and I'll talk about that a little later. And I think I'll stop there.

And then I think much of this we've covered. These are our mission deliverables for 2009 and 2010, again, really wanting to promote competition in the registry space by launching new gTLDs, expanding the internationalized domain names that will soon become available, both in generic and country code top-level domains, taking tangible steps to enhance the security of the DNS. What we're really saying there, and this is not going to be a topic of conversation particularly today, is how can we insert a level of trust into the DNS that doesn't exist today to give comfort that those transactions are trusted. So we're doing some work there, and other core mission improvements that I also won't belabor today.

And then lastly, I do have this slide looking at the strategic plan for 2009 to 2012. I'm not planning to review all of this today. But there is a very concise report, about ten pages or so, on the ICANN website that is actually quite

accessible, which is not always the case with some of our documents, but it does review in detail these concerns and this plan for moving ahead.

I wanted to briefly touch on some upcoming ICANN meetings. ICANN holds public meetings three times a year. We switch off from continent to continent. Again, it's very important to us to make the meetings accessible to people from around the world, so we try to switch off, and Seoul, Korea is our next meeting, the 25th through the 30th of October. But then we will be going to Africa in March, to Kenya, and then later on in 2010, to Latin America and to Europe.

And at these meetings, if you've not been to an ICANN meeting before, what you would find is roughly 1,200 - sometimes a little less, sometimes a little more - 1,200 people from the broader ICANN community coming together to discuss all these issues. It sometimes feels like we're a traveling show of 1,200 people moving from continent to continent, but I have to say there's tremendous value in these meetings.

Even from a staff perspective, they are convening events where decisions to get made, where there's huge networking opportunities. But from a policy perspective, I think the thing I find most valuable is that it's really a chance to talk face to face about issues that seem tough. They seem intractable sometimes, and when you sit people down face to face and really talk about what the underlying concerns are from different perspectives, you sometimes find that the solutions are buried in those different perspectives, and that there are ways to reach agreement and compromise that seem less illusive than they sometimes do with thousands of miles of distance between all of us the rest of the year. So we would welcome your participation, either in these meetings, or if they are logistically too challenging, working on comments in working groups, which can all be done remotely, so we hope you'll join us.

And that's the end of my introductory comments. Thank you so much for your time. Please let me know if you have any questions at all, and I think Baher will be now introducing our keynote speaker.

Baher Esmat: Are there any questions for Liz?

So at ICANN meetings we are used to questions. We are used to people lining up at the microphone and Edwin is usually one of those people so. I mean this is the introduction. This is to give you a quick introduction of what's going on. I know that some people are familiar with that, but for those who are not, please do not feel - do not hesitate to ask any questions.

So our next speaker is the keynote speaker today, Mr. Mohammad Gheyath is the Executive Director of the Technical Affairs at the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Mohammad, you have the floor.

Mohammad Gheyath: Good morning everyone. Distinguished guests, ICANN staff and all the attendees, welcome to the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi for this ICANN regional meeting. It is our pleasure to host it today and be a part of this important event that ICANN, as part of its responsibilities and continued support for different regions, conducts such regional meetings in different regions in order to increase the participation of different communities using the internet and different nations for different purposes and different interests.

I would like to thank ICANN again for hosting such an event in this region. We are very keen to be a part of the development that's happening in the internet industry and arena. And we are so keen to be a part of the negotiations and discussions that's happening within ICANN from different aspects, and one important aspect, which is today's discussion topic, the IDNs and gTLDs.

We all understand that outreach is very vital and it's crucial for the development of the industry, of the internet industry in particular. The outreach initiative that ICANN has launched helps all the regions and countries who do not have representations or do not have any possibility to be represented in ICANN meetings, to have a say, to have a voice where they can be presented through regional events at regional meetings like this, which is happening today.

Some countries and regions have limitations, whether they are technical, whether they are financial or geographic limitations, but they have a chance to be a part of such important events that ICANN hosts in different regions. We hope that today's event would add value to those regions and countries who could not be represented in ICANN and its global events and global meetings.

The Arab nations worldwide, and by Arab nations, worldwide I mean the Arab countries and the Arabic-speaking people, would welcome any opportunity to participate in ICANN. They would like to participate and add input to ICANN as an organization and to the internet as an industry, because they are a crucial part of the internet industry as we speak now.

The times have changed in Arab countries. The users have changed. The internet value has changed in Arab countries and Arab-speaking nations. So they would like to add value. They would like to benefit from what ICANN can offer (39:19 unintelligible) industry.

Our topic, which is of specific interest to the United Arab Emirates, is new gTLDs. As today the focus will be on this aspect, the United Arab Emirates has a specific interest in this and will keep a close outlook of what the developments are happening with the new gTLDs, in terms of the process applications and the start of the application, which ICANN might start very soon.

We are happy with the developments that are happening and we are keen that we'd like to see what's going to happen in the coming few months with ICANN, especially the ones, the meetings, which are going to happen in Korea. We are going to have a close eye on the meetings and to find out when the full implementation process will start.

The UAE has made enormous studies and analysis, and work in terms of the new gTLDs, whether it's locally and then within the UAE, or international with committees and partners who have advised in this field as well. We would like to see the gTLDs be implemented and the geographical names as well. We have a specific interest in such aspects and in this concept. We are following up closely with ICANN what the process is going to be and how it's going to be implemented.

We believe that the geographic gTLDs will have a specific benefit and would create a specific opportunity for local communities to benefit from the Internet, and add value to the users and the communities, which they represent.

Now, in addition to that, the introduction of the internationalized domain names, the IDN, as an acronym - as (41:03 Unintelligible) lots of acronyms are being used within ICANN.

So the IDN is a very important aspect for the UAE as well and the Arab-speaking nations. It's very important for us because it is going to add empowerment to the Arab-speaking nations within the internet industry. It adds value to them. It adds their contribution to the internet and it adds their benefit seeking from the internet industry as well.

We all know that the implementation processes of IDN is a very complex one and ICANN has been blamed over and over for the delays in the implementation process. Understanding such complexity and such

constraints that ICANN would face, we add our voice to millions around the world in seeking and urging ICANN to expedite the process and have the doors open for us to apply for applications.

Now, we hope that the regional meetings and the regional outreach initiatives that ICANN hosts, like the meetings today, would help and foster a quicker opening of the application. Those are people who understand what the IDNs are about and how they can apply for it and what benefits they can seek from it. So we hope that these events will add value to that and would expedite the process.

The UAE has been always, and is a great supporter of the Fast Track location method. In order to support that we have approached the Administrative Council for services in the UAE and we've obtained the top-level Arabic domain name, a ccTLD Arabic domain name for UAE, which is .emirate. It was approved and we got it. And this was as a result of a very efforts, very (42:44 Unintelligible) that the team has put in place, the AD Team actually, and we had lots of discussion and meetings with the leaders in the country. We had a number of iterations of names to be used and finally we approved the .emirate.

Our (42:59 unintelligible) today. Hopefully they are going to address this spot as well at the end of today's session in the panel discussion. Let's not forget our colleagues, the other Arab countries who have, on the other hand, worked very hard through a large number of initiatives like the Arabic Domain Name Pilot Project and the Arabic Step Working Group. They have worked for many years to realize the concept of having an Arabic domain name in place.

There have been lots of issues and discussion, and lots of issues have been resolved and refined, and I believe that in the context of Arab countries, we could say that we are ready for IDN. There have been lots of projects, lots of tests and lots of trials have been conducted. We believe that we are ready once ICANN opens the doors for application, we can be ready to apply for one.

Now we do understand the technical and the political concerns that ICANN is going through in expediting the process. However, we urge ICANN not to wait until some of the issues are resolved or the issues of a few countries are resolved, because the actual implementation of the process is crucial to the rest of the world. So there are some issues with some countries. We urge ICANN to have them discuss it with each other, close conversation, lots of meetings, lots of cooperation, and then try to resolve it, but not to stop the others from proceeding further.

We strongly believe that IDN is not a nice-to-have concept to have in Arab-speaking nations or that it's (44:37 Unintelligible) specifically. IDN is a must have. IDN would add value, not only to the internet users now, but will add to the generations to come forward. So it's very important for us. It's very crucial and we do support all the efforts and initiatives that ICANN (44:53 unintelligible) this.

The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, the organization which I am representing, and it's understanding of the importance of the internet and the management of attended domain names has established an entity, an independent entity, which is called the .aeda, the .ae Domain Administration, which looks after the Internet-related issues in the UAE, setting out the policies and the technical operations of the top-level domain name of the country. The .ae Domain Administration has been in operation since the 3rd of August, 2008. So yesterday, we marked our anniversary.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our colleagues, which are represented today here as well, the .ade Domain Administration. It's a remarkable day, 3rd of August, 2008 was a remarkable day in the history of the internet industry in United Arab Emirates. We made the change. We introduced competition in the internet arena, a concept which was not there for a very long time. And the organization itself, or the administration itself, is a world-class administration, the most advanced technical infrastructure and the highly skilled and experienced people, which are involved in it.

We are very happy with the level of experience that we have, with the level of expertise that has joined us, and we invested heavily in the infrastructure and people, and we will continue to invest because we believe that such investment will only add value to the growth of the internet in the UAE, and will put us in the right position against the world within this fast-growing internet community and society.

The .ae will provide - I'm sure they will (46:39 Unintelligible) at the end of the session, during the panel, would have more additions of what the ADA does and what the role of AD is. But in general, it will provide the momentum for the development of internet in the country, through policy settings, through strong, sound administration and world-class technical infrastructure, and of course, world-class expertise.

And we all understand that the internet has become, in the UAE, a source of everyday life. It's not for business users anymore. The internet is very crucial in the UAE now. The society has changed. The environment has changed. Everyone is dependent on the Internet starting from media to

public health and safety services, to education and so on. So it is a community that's growing. It's a community that's integrating to everyday life and everyone's life. So the TRA is determined through that to implement and sustain the government's strategies and technology. Our government has as a very sound structure towards technology and the innovation of services within the country, and how to integrate technology and innovations within everyday life. We are determined to sustain such a strategy, and we are determined to sustain it through a very aggressive approach to cope with the country's demands for the development of internet industry, because we believe that the internet is going to be the platform for these services to come.

I would like thank all the participations of the participants and thank people for attending this meeting. I wish all the best out of this meeting. I wish that all the discussions would lead to consensus and common understanding of how to move forward. I wish that all the issues would be resolved, if you have issues, to be resolved between the participants. And I hope that can build a bridge between the nations and societies, as this is the aim at the end of the day. The internet brings everyone closer to each other, all of the societies and all the nations, and we hope that this meeting will add value to this year's meetings that ICANN is conducting. We support the initiative from ICANN. We would definitely be available and present at all the events that ICANN can foresee in this region. And I wish you all the best and good luck. Thank you very much.

Baher Esmat: Thank you Mr. Mohammad. Congratulations on the first anniversary of the .ae and congratulations on the good work that has been done. And I was quite glad to hear about your - I mean the interest that UAE and the UAE government has in IDNs and new gTLDs, particularly geographic names. I hope that your team will be following closely the ICANN work over the next few months until this work gets to conclusion.

So, and now we are going to have a coffee break until 11:00 a.m. So the coffee break is served right by the door and we should be back by 11:00.

Thank you.