

# ICANN83 Readout

## Highlights & Take-Aways from the Policy Forum in Prague

On 20 June 2025, **eco – Association of the Internet Industry** and **ICANN – Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers** co-hosted a [ICANN83 Readout](#) webinar to summarise and discuss key outcomes from the [ICANN83 Policy Forum](#), which took place in Prague, in the Czech Republic, from 9 to 12 June 2025. The online session offered a community-based recap of the main developments, milestones, and stakeholder perspectives from the meeting, providing insight not only into technical and procedural evolutions, but also broader governance themes relevant to ICANN’s multistakeholder model.

The readout was introduced and moderated by **Lars Steffen**, Head of International Digital Infrastructures and Resilience at eco. Co-hosting the event was **Christopher Mondini**, ICANN Vice President, Stakeholder Engagement and Managing Director for Europe.

The panel featured a comprehensive lineup of voices from across ICANN’s stakeholder structure, including:

- **Constanze Buerger**, Member of the ASO Address Council
- **Nicolas Caballero**, Chair of the GAC
- **Jordan Carter**, Member of the ccNSO Council
- **Philippe Fouquart**, Chair of the ISPCP
- **Ram Mohan**, Chair of the SSAC
- **Nick Wenban-Smith**, TCCM

### ICANN Acronyms used in this report:

**GAC** - Governmental Advisory Committee  
**GNSO** - Generic Names Supporting Organization  
**ccNSO** - Country Code Names Supporting Organization  
**CSG** - Commercial Stakeholder Group  
**ISPCP** - Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers  
**ALAC** - At-Large Advisory Committee  
**ASO AC** - Address Supporting Organization Address Council  
**SSAC** - Security and Stability Advisory Committee  
**TCCM** - Technical Community Coalition for Multistakeholderism (TCCM)

## A streamlined forum in a historic setting

**Christopher Mondini** opened the webinar with reflections on the return to Prague – a city last visited by the ICANN community 12 years ago. He noted the logistical and symbolic significance of revisiting a European venue steeped in history, which offered an ideal setting for forward-thinking policy discussions.

Attendance figures exceeded expectations, with over 1,300 on-site participants and more than 550 joining remotely from 130 countries, reflecting a strong global engagement. The leaner, more focused agenda of the Policy Forum featured nearly 100 sessions, with the absence of plenary sessions encouraging deep dives into core policy areas.

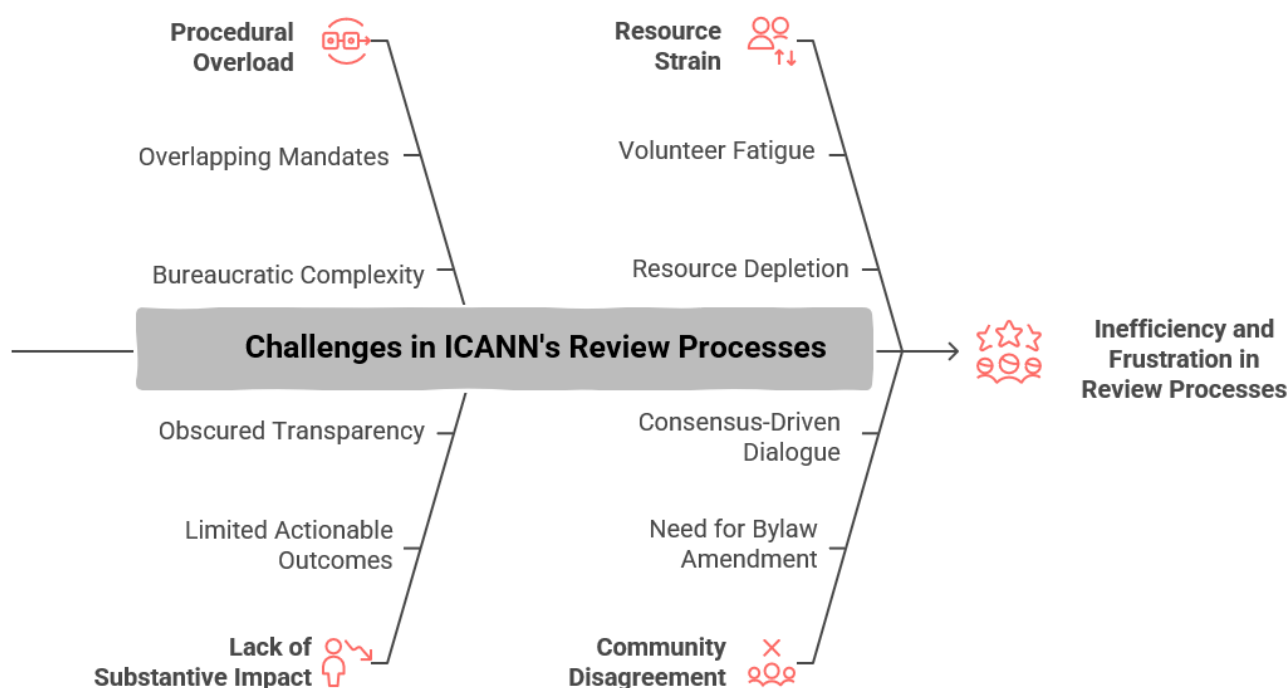
Among the milestones recognised were the 10-year anniversary of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group, which has made major strides in promoting a multilingual and inclusive Internet, and a [touching tribute to the late Nigel Hickson](#), a long-standing and highly respected ICANN community member whose contributions were fondly recalled.



## Revisiting the review system: Towards simplification and accountability

One of the most robust conversations during the forum was centred on ICANN's system of organisational and specific reviews. **Jordan Carter**, Vice Chair of the ccNSO Council, detailed the ICANN Board's May resolution to pause various review processes, including the much-anticipated ATRT-4 ([Accountability and Transparency Review](#)). The Board also formally concluded the [pilot holistic review](#), citing its limited capacity to generate actionable outcomes. This move signalled a shift in approach, one that values quality over quantity and urges a reassessment of how reviews are structured and prioritised within the organisation.

This pause has prompted divergent views across the community. As **Carter** outlined, there is a debate over whether a temporary bylaw amendment is needed to legitimise this pause or whether the community should proceed with a consensus-driven dialogue to recalibrate the system. He acknowledged the need to address overlapping review mandates, review fatigue, and implementation bottlenecks, which are undermining the system's efficiency. Many community members have echoed his sentiment, calling for a more nimble and strategic framework that better accommodates evolving Internet governance needs without placing undue strain on volunteers and resources.



**Philippe Fouquart**, speaking for the ISPCP constituency, reinforced these concerns. He emphasised that current frustrations stem not just from procedural overload, but also from a perceived lack of substantive impact. A prevailing sentiment in his constituency is that the original aims of the ATRT process – transparency, accountability, and organisational improvement – are being obscured by bureaucratic complexity. This has led to growing scepticism about the tangible value delivered through repeated cycles of review.

Both **Carter** and **Fouquart** advocated for a streamlined model that aligns with the continuous improvement process and restores confidence in ICANN's institutional accountability. They suggested that future reviews could benefit from being more

thematic and outcome-driven, focusing on specific challenges rather than exhaustive structural evaluations. Such an approach, they argued, would make the process more relevant and engaging for stakeholders, and more adaptable to the needs of an increasingly dynamic Internet landscape.

## WSIS+20: Strategic preparations amid geopolitical uncertainties

The [WSIS+20 process](#) was another major theme, with **Nick Wenban-Smith**, representing the Technical Community Coalition for Multistakeholderism (TCCM), providing an overview of how stakeholders are preparing for this crucial UN-led review. The TCCM has taken proactive steps in shaping unified messaging across the technical community, and discussions in Prague confirmed the importance of early coordination ahead of such multilateral milestones. The eco Association is one of the supporters of the TCCM.

The WSIS+20 summit, scheduled for later in the year, marks two decades since the World Summit on the Information Society. It offers an opportunity – and a risk – for reassessing the multistakeholder model. Within the ICANN ecosystem, preparatory discussions in Prague highlighted both optimism and concern: optimism about the community’s ability to speak with a unified voice, and concern over rising state-centric proposals for Internet governance that could weaken the multistakeholder ethos. Several speakers also emphasised the importance of articulating how technical stability and governance pluralism are interlinked, particularly in the face of competing global narratives around digital sovereignty.

This alignment in Prague was especially timely, as it coincided with preparations for the [Internet Governance Forum \(IGF\) in Oslo](#), providing an interim platform to test messaging and reinforce collaborative strategies. ICANN stakeholders were urged to engage not just at the global level, but also with national governments to advocate for an open, inclusive Internet governance model.

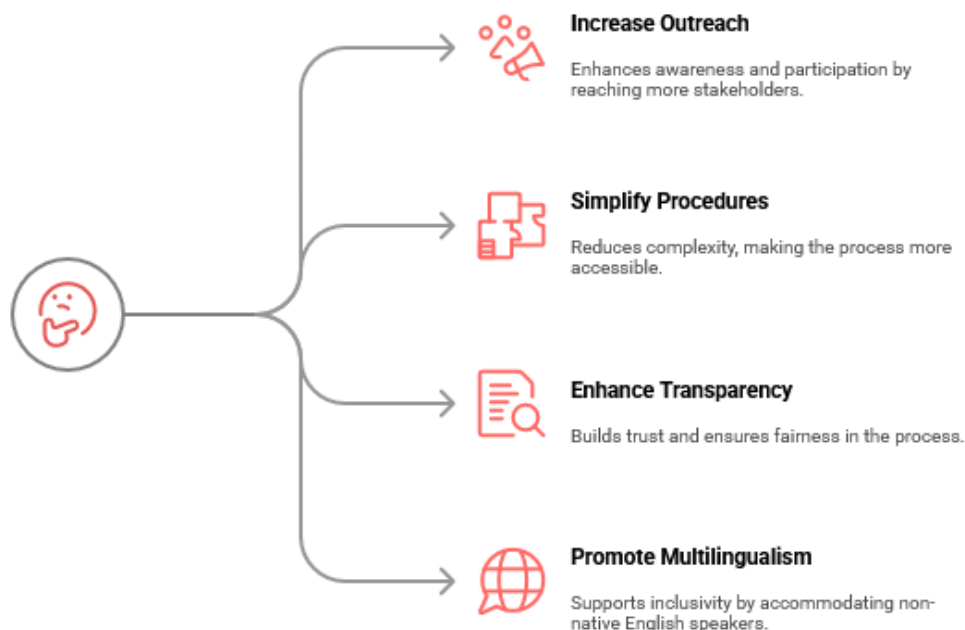
## The next round of new gTLDs: Support, readiness, and fairness

**Nicolas Caballero**, Chair of the GAC, provided an update on the progress of the next round of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs). He praised the efforts of the Implementation Review Team (IRT) for releasing a complete draft of the [Applicant Guidebook](#) (AGB) for public comment. However, **Caballero** also expressed the GAC’s concerns regarding inclusivity and preparedness. He highlighted that while procedural advancements had been made, gaps remain in ensuring equal access to the application process, especially for communities with fewer technical and financial resources.

The [Applicant Support Programme](#) (ASP), intended to foster geographic and economic diversity, is facing challenges. Notably, **Caballero** flagged a worrying trend: very few applications have been completed, despite the halfway mark of the submission window nearing. This, he warned, undermines the programme’s goal of enhancing participation from underrepresented regions such as the Global South. He urged the Board to initiate an early review, rather than wait until 20 applications are submitted, to assess effectiveness and identify barriers. He suggested that this early review should not only look at quantitative indicators but also involve qualitative feedback from applicants about their experience navigating the process.

Furthermore, **Caballero** pointed out that increased outreach and tailored guidance are needed to ensure that the support programme is reaching its intended audience. He called for more collaboration with regional organisations and Internet governance institutions to raise awareness and provide hands-on assistance to prospective applicants. According to him, the complexity of the AGB and its associated materials may be deterring participation from less-resourced stakeholders, making simplification a critical priority.

## How to improve the application process?



The GAC also reiterated its support for improvements in transparency, especially concerning the treatment of geographic names, the protection of public interest, and DNS abuse prevention. Suggestions for reform included simplified application procedures, stronger local engagement through registries and ccTLDs, and the promotion of multilingualism via ICANN's localisation initiatives. **Caballero** further advocated for the inclusion of clearer definitions and justifications in the AGB to eliminate ambiguities that could disadvantage non-native English speakers or those unfamiliar with ICANN's institutional language. These steps, **Caballero** argued, would contribute to a more equitable and robust application round, one that aligns more closely with ICANN's commitment to inclusivity and global participation.

## Community coordination on DNS abuse and resilience

While only briefly touched on during the readout, DNS abuse remains a central concern for many within the ICANN community. There was strong reaffirmation of cross-community collaboration to combat malicious practices such as phishing, malware distribution, and botnet control. These types of abuse not only threaten individual users and network operators, but also undermine trust in the Domain Name System itself. As such, DNS abuse is increasingly viewed not just as a security concern, but as a systemic issue with far-reaching implications for global digital resilience.



The eco Association's [topDNS initiative](#) continues to be an important multi-stakeholder platform, bringing together registries, registrars, service providers, and public interest groups to share data and improve threat detection capabilities. By encouraging voluntary best practices and fostering transparency, topDNS plays a key role in translating policy goals into operational improvements across the domain ecosystem.

**Ram Mohan** (SSAC) stressed that “*effective DNS abuse mitigation requires real cooperation across the ecosystem*”. He pointed to the need for clearer mechanisms of accountability, faster escalation procedures, and better-resourced incident response teams. The discussions in Prague underscored the importance of shared data, improved incident response, and a holistic approach to ecosystem resilience. Participants also noted that bridging the gap between technical expertise and regulatory oversight remains a crucial area for capacity building.

Although detailed policy proposals were not finalised, there was consensus that continued collaboration will be crucial to maintaining trust and security. Future work will likely focus on formalising response frameworks, expanding outreach to underserved regions, and exploring public-private partnerships that can enhance the efficacy of abuse prevention strategies. The commitment displayed during ICANN83 suggests a growing recognition that collective vigilance and innovation are essential in safeguarding the integrity of the Internet’s naming infrastructure.

**Ram Mohan** also highlighted the ongoing work of the [Coalition on Digital Impact \(CODI\)](#); a independent, global alliance of like-minded organisations (including the eco Association) founded to empower communities to access and navigate the Internet in their native languages, ensuring meaningful online participation for every linguistic group.

## Outlook: Shaping a future-ready ICANN ecosystem

Looking ahead, the ICANN83 Forum painted a picture of a community that is introspective but forward-looking. Stakeholders acknowledged that while procedural reform is important, the real challenge lies in recalibrating ICANN’s processes to make them more adaptable, inclusive, and responsive.

The conversation on review reform, enhancements to the gTLD application process, and engagement in WSIS+20 all point to a broader evolution in ICANN’s governance culture. As **Christopher Mondini** highlighted in his closing remarks, the Readout format itself allows for reflective synthesis and broader participation, reinforcing ICANN’s commitment to openness and collaboration.

As the community prepares for [ICANN84](#) and the [WSIS+20 summit](#), the take-away from Prague is clear: transparency, accessibility, and shared responsibility must remain at the heart of Internet governance.

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**The recording of the ICANN83 Readout is available to watch here:**

<https://youtu.be/8BbFjmLbQ6g>

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