

Address of the President and CEO of ICANN to Sub Committee A (Internet Governance)

Tunis, 14 November 2005

Mr. Chair, I would like to thank you, and members of the Sub Committee, for the opportunity to speak here today. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the government and people of Tunisia for their warm hospitality in hosting this important Summit.

Let me speak directly to one of the points raised in this morning's fruitful discussion: the invitation of the Chair of ICANN, Dr Vint Cerf, to the Chair of the Governmental Advisory Committee, Mr. Mohamed Sharil Tarmizi of 8 November.

Twice previously governments have been asked as to how they wish to structure their participation in ICANN and its technical policy processes. The first was at the founding of ICANN when the formula preferred by the 30 or more participating governments was one of an advisory capacity – hence the choice of name. (Mr. Chair, I note that at the founding of ICANN, invitations were issued to all governments to participate in the GAC, including written invitations to every member of the Geneva-based Intergovernmental Organizations). In 2001, ICANN undertook a reform process and again the governments considered how they would like to participate including such issues as the option of significant Board representation and budget input. At this stage, the members of the GAC agreed on nominating a non-voting Board member, and strengthening the processes for GAC views to be imparted to the ICANN Board. Indeed these processes are the most stringent of any group of stakeholders in the present ICANN processes.

Some here present will recall that on 14 June 2005, during comments at the public consultation of the WGIG, I observed that it may be appropriate again to revisit the role of the Governments in ICANN and suggested that it was appropriate for Governments themselves to evaluate possible ways for further improvements of the GAC now that the GAC has over 100 members and continues to grow steadily.

Dr Cerf's letter is intended to commence, once again, a formal process for dialogue with and among governments as to how their role could be strengthened, and made more effective, within ICANN's multistakeholder framework. The meeting of the GAC and the ICANN Board in Vancouver is to start a good-faith, practical initiative dedicated to how best address government concerns, particularly as they have been expressed in the WSIS context, and to see what measures need to be taken to make cooperation more effective, including ensuring the participation of developing countries.

I can assure the sub-committee that the spirit behind this invitation is for an open discussion. From the Board's perspective it is keen to be in dialogue on all topics put

forward by the members of the GAC – and membership of the GAC is open to all governments. Some topics which have already been suggested by some members of the GAC are changes to the name of the committee, its procedures, how it is resourced, how it interacts with other stakeholders in the process of technical policy development, how it supports participation by developing country officials, and its Board representation. Please do not consider this listing a limitation on topics which may be raised. The Board is willing to engage in pragmatic dialogue on all issues, in the overarching context of ICANN being an internationally-organized multi-stakeholder organization.

May I note that it is part of ICANN's bylaws, and its operating culture, to welcome such stakeholder driven review of ICANN structures and procedures. Indeed, the Generic Names Supporting Organization of ICANN is in the midst of one of the regular reviews of its structure and procedures required by the bylaws. ICANN has evolution and reform hot wired into its bylaws. It also has a proven history of implementing these reforms.

Mr. Chair, the Board of ICANN is sincere in its enthusiasm to engage in pragmatic dialogue with governments on the issues important to them – both in how GAC should evolve and reform, and on the sort of public policy issues identified by the WSIS participants. I exhort governments to attend the meeting in Vancouver and bring ideas, suggestions and considered proposals.

Thank you.