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At-Large Advisory Committee Statement.

To the ICANN Board on Public Consultation
Related to Development of a Travel Policy

To be read in conjunction with the Statement on the Draft Operating Plan for FY 2008-2009, a copy is found (for easy cross reference with this document) in PDF format, from [this link](#).

We present our compliments to the Board of Directors of ICANN and welcome the opportunity to make our comments on the public consultation being held to provide input so that comprehensive, yet flexible, travels support policy for the volunteer community.

At-Large has a perspective on this subject that is probably unique amongst the volunteer community, excepting the Board of Directors, in that we have been receiving travel and subsistence support for some years now. In this vein, we would like to thank the staff and the Board for this assistance, as without it the community would likely be much smaller, certainly less well-informed, and certainly less able to participate in ICANN's work.

Improvements Seen in Existing Travel Support

We have seen considerable changes to the way in which travel support is administered over the past few years. When support began, it was largely based upon a reimbursement system, where community members would have to pay up-front for all expenses, and then reclaim them back – often with very significant delays. Now, airfare is bought for us, and we interact directly with the American Express travel agents to choose arrangements that work for us. We receive per-diems based upon an amount determined by ICANN based upon the local cost of living, instead of reimbursement based upon actual expenses. Whilst this system has not been perfect, we do believe that it is continually improving.

Per Diem Payment Arrangements

We wish to emphasize that the process by which per-diems are paid needs to take into account that there are countries where it is impractical or impossible, to receive incoming international wire transfers. We believe there should always be a way to receive cash at a meeting to cope with this situation. Additionally, there are participants who find it difficult to wait to receive per diems until after the meeting as this requires participants to go out-of-pocket and not all participants

have the financial wherewithal to be able to do this. Per Diems should also be calculated or set by reference to some internationally recognized system, which is rechecked periodically and currency fluctuation need to be taken into account.

Level of Travel Support Depends Upon Many Factors

We believe that before the ICANN community will be able to determine what the right level of travel support should be, the community will first need to look at two other issues:

1. **Remote Participation Options.** The ability of participants to participate in a meaningful way remotely has an enormous impact upon the number of people who must travel to face-to-face meetings. We wish to once again emphasize that remote participation at ICANN meetings is, frankly, completely broken. Even basic operations like providing telephonic remote access don't work regularly – and this is no surprise, since ICANN is been uniquely able to engage a continuous stream of completely inadequate vendors to provide audiovisual services for every meeting that is held. Having high-quality in-room audiovisual services is a prerequisite to making remote access work. Quality remote access is a prerequisite for allowing meaningful contribution by remote participants. If meaningful two-way remote participation – which should include video, as well as audio, in real time – were available this could change the conversation about how many people need to physically travel to a meeting – and also allow far more input and participation than will ever be possible in any other way. It is inexcusable that, meeting after meeting, even the most basic remote participation does not work and a list of excuses is made instead of fixing the problem.
2. **Structure of ICANN Meetings:** It is clear that there is a necessity for face-to-face meetings at the international level. The question to be asked is: would more regional meetings intercessionally provide an opportunity for more cost-effective involvement by a greater stakeholder pool, and at the same

time prove to be an important means of distilling the different regional approaches to issues which could then be brought to closure at international meetings? We believe that this model should at least be attempted. As a community that is organized on a regional model we see a lot of merit to working with regional groups of other stakeholders on a horizontal basis, and then taking the results of that dialogue to the international level. It seems to us that this might result in global policy being developed which more comprehensively took regional differences of view, and provided regionally different implementation modalities for certain policy options where appropriate. This model may also allow more face-to-face interaction than is possible with international meetings alone. It seems to us that since more regional meetings are being held by ICANN – though unfortunately often only focusing on certain groups like contracted parties – these should be held on a balanced basis for all stakeholder groups. In short – if regional meetings are going to be held for registrars and registries, as they are today, then they should be expanded to become accessible to all ICANN communities.

3. **Location of ICANN Meetings.** It is a simple fact that the cost of some meeting venues is exorbitant. A perfect example was New Delhi. ICANN will simply not receive the best participation from any stakeholder group if it holds meetings in locations where the only reasonable hotel options cost USD500 per night. ICANN should host meetings in the various regions – but it should choose locations that are affordable. It is not congruent with ICANN’s stated goal of being open, inclusive, and transparent to hold meetings in venues where even wealthy governments’ representatives’ per-diems do not cover the cost of attending the meeting. We believe that ICANN should not host International Meetings in any city where a good three-star-hotel room, in locations convenient to the conference venue, cannot be had for EUR100-150 or less.
4. **Timing for Purchase of Travel Arrangements.** The At-Large community is always ready to arrange travel long before ICANN’s internal processes allow travel to be booked. We believe that travel arrangements should be made

many months in advance in order to save on the cost of those arrangements as everyone knows that airfare gets cheaper the farther out from when you travel the tickets are purchased.

5. **Accommodation of volunteers** ALAC member and representative from ALS's are often placed in lower quality hotels remote from the main conference hotel/venue means isolation from the main events and less opportunity for At Large to contribute, leading from point 4 above our willingness to commit to attend meetings very early in the planning process means that it should be possible to block book rooms for volunteers when the meeting is arranged, and to be given priority to stay in the main conference hotel at ICANN arranged rates.

We do wish to emphasize that whichever meeting model is used, face-to-face meeting attendance is crucial, and considering human nature, it always will be.

It is essential that whatever system is settled upon must take into account these two fundamental philosophies:

- Different communities participating in ICANN have different needs for support, because their participation is differently financed. There is no magic “one size fits all” solution.
- For those who receive support the rules should be the same. For example, one community should not fly business class whilst another does not.

We therefore propose the following:

1. **For international meetings, all members of Bylaw-recognized bodies should receive travel and expense support.** What we mean is that the members of the GNSO Council, the At-Large Advisory Committee, the SSAC, etc. should receive ICANN funding for airfare, hotel, and a reasonable per-diem.
2. **For regional meetings, all members of Bylaw-recognized bodies from that region should receive travel and expense support on the same basis and to the same extent as at International Meetings.** ALS are often also

involved in relevant regional organizations e.g. NIC's, NOG's, TLD and regional meetings with events that are contiguous with activities/ meetings of this organisations would also be advantageous and cost effective.

3. **Members of communities who are:**

- active in ICANN, and
- local to the meeting in question, and;
- who will otherwise likely be unable to attend the meeting,

Should receive travel support for at least a representative number of participants in respect of airfare, hotel, and a reasonable per-diem. For example, At-Large, non-commercial users, and the like should be able to send a representative number of participants from the region to a regional meeting, or to the international meeting held in their region (which is presently the case for At-Large, but not for the NCUC). Conversely, groups such as registrars and registries, who have a commercial interest in attending the meeting and have companies funding them, should not receive funding. This is simply a recognition that if ICANN wants to hear the voices of the public interest, this cannot be adequately ensured without some form of travel support as the expense of meeting attendance without support will be simply beyond the means of the vast proportion of participants from these groups.

1. **When determining eligibility for travel support for participants in the third category, priority should go to those eligible participants who are active in the main issues that will be discussed at the meeting.** ICANN, through a bottom-up process, would need to decide what the major areas of work will be at forthcoming meetings in order to make 'operationalization' of this proposal practical – but in our view, this in itself would be an improvement, as it would allow greater intercessional focus on the issues which are known to be the main ones at the next ICANN meeting.
2. **Some provision should be made to allow those from developing countries in particular, but from communities who would not otherwise be eligible**

for travel support in general, to be able to attend with travel support. The existing fellowship provides this possibility now for some, but not all, stakeholder groups. We believe this program is helpful, should be continued, and should be made available to participants from all ICANN stakeholder groups.

Rules and Procedures Associated with Travel Support

As previously mentioned, we believe that the rules associated with travel support should be applicable to all. We propose the following as those most relevant, though of course the Staff of ICANN should 'flesh out' a more complete administrative process for community review at the appropriate time; this list is not meant to be exhaustive:

1. In general, those receiving travel supports should fly by an upgradeable economy class of fare, so that they can upgrade with their own miles if they choose.
2. Travel should be by Premium Economy or Business Class (and here it would be preferable to look at comfort metrics such as seat pitch rather than class**) when:
 - The flight is more than **X** hours in length, Where x= an agreed time based on best practice for working travel {a quick review of online sources of such Travel policies in various organisations show times ranging from 5 - 10 hours being used with a median of 7 hours} ICANN should investigate what constitutes best practice here so that not only are the costs of travel but true productivity i.e. the ability of travelers to work in an effective and productive manner as soon as they arrive at venues (or as soon as practical after) being considered. or;
 - There's a valid medical reason, or;

- The traveler is very tall or large – perhaps over 1.90m in height, for example.
3. The UN per-diem rates, exclusive of the lodging portion since ICANN would be paying for lodging, should be used as the standard for determining the appropriate level of per-diem. Presently, per-diem rates appear not to be based on any recognized system – this should be changed, so that arbitrariness is avoided.
 4. Hotel charges paid by ICANN should include the cost of Internet access, if it is not complimentary. This is very important – members of the volunteer community often need to do work during their time ‘off’ during ICANN meetings. They should not have to go out of pocket in order to pay to do work, when they are already using holiday or personal time to work on ICANN issues far from home. The amounts involved are often relatively small for some people – but not for others, especially those who come from developing countries.

**Regardless of 'Class' seats (particularly when they are booked at a time advanced enough from the travel date to take advantage of heavy discounts) would mean in most cases flying people cheaper and in better comfort / conditions for less than the currently booked Economy Y & B (full fare) seats or even the less often managed M, H, or N (standard fare) cost. Further Business class seats (unless under exceptional circumstances) should be booked for I & Z (discounted fares) not the J, C & D class full fares (the last two indicate no upgrade is possible) whenever possible.

In closing, we thank the board in advance for its consideration of our views. We look forward to a response to our concerns and recommendations in due course.

Transmitted (via email) on behalf of the ALAC,
by Cheryl Langdon-Orr

ALAC Chair 2007-2008.