



Comment on the Draft ICANN Africa Strategic Plan 2016-20

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Business Constituency Submission

GNSO//CSG//BC

Background

This document is the response of the ICANN Business Constituency (BC), from the perspective of business users and registrants, as defined in our Charter:

The mission of the Business Constituency is to ensure that ICANN policy positions are consistent with the development of an Internet that:

1. promotes end-user confidence because it is a safe place to conduct business
2. is competitive in the supply of registry and registrar and related services
3. is technically stable, secure and reliable.

BC Comment on the ICANN Africa Strategic Plan - July 2016 -June 2020¹

The BC commends the Review Team that worked on the strategic plan. While noting the moderate success of the preceding strategic plan, 2012-2017, the team added two (2) new objectives to strengthen the benefit realization of the plan.

It is the BC's view that not enough focus is being given to business users of the Internet in the Strategic Plan and the process leading to its preparation. Business users are those companies – both large and small/even micro – that build businesses using unique online identifiers. They register and use domain names and IP addresses to deliver direct customer services, and many build networks and services to fulfill the important evolution of government services to the digital world.

These companies are a growing force in Africa and should be more engaged in the ICANN Africa Strategy. The associations that represent their interests offer an additional way to strengthen the engagement with national governments at the national level – which is essential to engage a broader base of informed and supportive government representatives, including the designated GAC member. For example, in most African countries, cyber security will be spread across multiple ministries, and it is unlikely that the GAC-designated representative is responsible for cyber issues in their country.

ICT and business associations and their members work in their countries on such issues. In addition, many of these associations and businesses are engaging in national IGFs, advancing relationships with governmental representatives – typically not the GAC member but those who affect multi stakeholder discussions at other fora, such as the IGF, the UN High Level Forum, and the ITU.

Thus, the BC believes that the more the strategy focuses on business users, the more ICANN will reach local businesses who enable sustainable investment for development of the Domain Name business in Africa. This also supports other two core focus areas: more participation of the African broader stakeholder communities; and inclusion of African stakeholders in multi stakeholder governance.

¹ See ICANN Public Comment page at <https://www.icann.org/public-comments/africa-strategic-plan-2018-07-30-en>

During the first five years of ICANN's Africa Strategy, there has been strong interest in working with initial efforts organized by business users in Africa. We also note that BC members have been very welcomed in all of the face-to-face working sessions held at ICANN.

We do, however, suggest that more collaboration between the BC Outreach Committee and the Regional team and VP for Business Engagement can benefit the Africa Strategy. For example, we welcome the establishment of the ICANN Engagement Center in Nairobi, Kenya. However, the focus is on technical matters, versus focus on DNS management. We fully support this as a priority but suggest that inclusion of business concerns will strengthen the success of the Engagement Center.

For example, the Center could include sessions that are about "Securing your website", or "How the Domain Name System affects your online business." It could target midsize and small business, working with national level ICT associations [Note: these are rarely part of African Internet related associations, so offer a new opportunity to reach business users]

Members of the Review Team identified a gap in the participation of businesses and yet no outreach was extended to the business community as highlighted in page 5 of the draft plan. The BC welcomes an opportunity to engage with the ICANN Global stakeholder engagement team for Africa and V.P. for Business Engagement on areas where collaboration with the business Communities in Africa can contribute to broadening and deepening business engagement.

The Report includes several ICANN-supported Initiatives but does not say how to engage businesses:

9: DNS Exchange Program: While we support such a program, we ask whether ICANN could consider an Exchange/Internship program for ICT associations in Africa, who are focuses on developing business that use the unique identifiers, rather than operating a ccTLD, registrar, etc.

10: Government Engagement; ICT associations in Africa are now often engaging with their national IGF, and also, in their policy work, with their governments, not limited to telecom regulators, but at the Ministerial level. Engagement and inclusion of these national business entities will add additional work activities to the regional team, but we believe will strengthen how businesses from Africa can contribute and strengthen the key message to policy makers that African business supports ICANN.

Continue support of events organized by business user organizations with African presence in many countries, such as AfICTA and support for business speakers from the BC in highly relevant multi stakeholder events, including the IGF and ICANN meetings.

The present approach of the Fellowship Program is limited in its support of bringing business users, yet in spite of this, the BC has been highly effective in recruiting those who were approved to attend. More must be done to establish criteria for applying for fellowships so that priority is given to the parts of ICANN who have very limited "candidates" attending ICANN's meetings.

The BC also wishes to suggest that apart from aligning the strategy to ICANN strategy, the strategy should be further aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and in particular Goal 8-Economic Growth, Goal 9-Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure, and Goal 17-Partnerships for the

Goal. Noting that the continent has great development potential, a contextual view of the strategy in would be beneficial.

Following the above, it is hereby proposed that 6b. (page 9) be amended as follows:

6b. Attract Africa private sector entities to invest more in eCommerce towards a vibrant Internet / DNS ecosystem.

On Projects and KPIs, Page 10, 6.5 & 6 1e are proposed to be amended:

6.5 Engagement with African business stakeholders

1) e. Increased African business investment in DNS and participation in ICANN.

Other comment areas are syntactic in nature, such as:

1. Suggestion of capacity **development** in place of capacity **building** in tune with the Sustainable **Development** Goals agenda.
2. Page 7, 3rd paragraph: remove **should** for the statement to read: The Africa Strategy Review team was in general agreement that Africa ~~should~~ deserves...
3. Page 8, 3b: replace **customer** with **consumer**...
4. Page 9.10c: replace **best** with **good**.
5. Page 9, 10c: replace **polies** with **policies**.

It is encouraging to note that over 100 projects are proposed to be executed across 8 strategic objectives. There would be a fair balance in execution across all regions in Africa, with adequate matrix to track its impact against ICANN's Strategic plan.

Furthermore, since global stakeholders through the empowered community can block ICANN's budget, more transparency should be provided on each project, objectives, location, promoters, and costs.

The steering committee selection process and its charter should be published for public comment for before adoption. The charter must be clear on terms of membership and rules of engagement to discourage capture by a few. It would also be helpful to include in the report the list of persons who participated in this review.

The BC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Africa Strategy and looks forward to continuing and strengthening our engagement in bringing more African stakeholders to ICANN's activities in Africa and also to the ICANN face to face meetings, as well as to continuing our collaboration to build ICANN engagement in business user events in Africa.

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This comment was drafted by Jimson Olufuye, Lawrence OlaWale-Roberts, and Marilyn Cade.

It was approved in accord with the BC charter.