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LONDON – RSSAC Public Information Session  
Monday, June 23, 2014 – 13:30 to 15:00  
ICANN – London, England

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN: So welcome to this meeting. This is the Root-Server System Advisory Committee overview and reorganization process update.

My name is Lars-Johan Liman. I work for Netnod, one of the root server operators. We operate "I" root out of Stockholm, Sweden. And I'm also one of the co-chairs of -- excuse me, one of the co-chairs of RSSAC.

And I'll be giving you an update, assisted by Kaveh Ranjbar and Suzanne Woolf, who are also members of the committee.

So for the benefit of those who are not familiar with RSSAC, first, a quick introduction to what RSSAC is and does.

We are -- the Root-Server System Advisory Committee, we are an advisory committee to the ICANN Board of Trustees. In relationship, that is very much like SSAC, except we have a very much more narrow scope, so that we advise the board on matters relating to the operation and administration and security and integrity of the Internet's root server system. That's the very narrow scope. So we don't at all have the wide overview that -- that SSAC has.

More specifically, we communicate on matters relating to the operations of root servers and we do that not only with the ICANN community but also with the technical community in general, so we try to have a wide communication base.

And we also see to the administration of the root zone.

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So it's not only the operation of the actual servers but also how the root zone is generated and distributed to the root servers.

Excuse me.

We also engage in ongoing threat assessments. We respond to requests for information or advice from the board. We report periodically to the ICANN community and to the board on our activities. And we also make policy recommendations to the board, upon request.

And in the organizational chart of ICANN, there are many of those. This is one that I happened to find on the Web. We are here in this corner, right by SSAC and some others.

We also try to participate in various activities. This hasn't been so much in the past, so we're trying to actually step up and engage more than we have in the past, so we now act as one of the regular advisory committees so we do intend to take part in the NTIA stewardship transition process. We definitely think we have a stake there.

We do take part in ICANN accountability discussions because transparency and accountability are very important things, at least to me personally.

And we're very open to take part in general multistakeholder discussions. We want to be approachable. So if you have any questions regarding how the root servers work or -- or how the processes -- what the processes look like or if any ideas you have have an impact on that system, we're welcome to discuss that with you.

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And of course we interact with the ICANN board of directors -- we have one representative on the board -- and also with the ICANN nominating committee.

So what does RSSAC not do?

Well, RSSAC is not a vehicle to impose regulation on root server operators because that's -- that's simply not the role we have. You'll have to remember the limited scope that RSSAC has, which is to provide advice regarding the root server operators -- root server operations, and that's what we try to stick to.

ICANN has a system of structural reviews that happen every now and then, and of course RSSAC was being reviewed by one of these review teams.

The review team came with a number of recommendations to improve on the structure which we've taken to heart and we're trying to address.

One was to more clearly define the membership of RSSAC.

Another one was to structure open and transparent processes for producing work and making decisions.

And also to improve on the staff support.

So the new RSSAC that we're working with now and that we're trying to put in place has two bodies. One is the -- we refer to it as the RSSAC caucus, which is a body of experts, and I will get deeper into that later in the presentation.

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And we have the RSSAC formal committee where -- which has members appointed by the ICANN board, and it also has a number of liaisons to other bodies.

So the new RSSAC has better defined procedures. We are working on an operations and procedures document which is fairly lengthy. It's taking a bit of time to hash out the details in that document, but the structure is there, and it specifies the RSSAC caucus, where we intend to have the caucus as a wide and open group of experts from which we can select work teams which will produce documents where the RSSAC formal -- formal committee will then take formal actions based on these documents that are produced by the caucus, or the work teams from the caucus.

So these new procedures, they contain initial procedures -- let me see. This first bullet doesn't make real sense, does it.

The formal committee -- it should say that the RSSAC formal committee does create initial processes and procedures, which is what we're undergoing right now by building up this new structure and creating the process documents and everything like that.

And we -- that formal committee will also be responsible for selecting and keeping track of work items, to receive input from people who have questions or -- or wish to receive advice, most importantly from the board but also from a wider audience, other ICANN bodies, the general technical community or what have you, and to select and prioritize these work items, so that we can keep an even workload on the people who actually perform the work.

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It will also appoint work parties from the caucus, this wider body of experts, and select groups who will then produce documents.

By having smaller work groups, we believe that the work can be more efficient and that we can have groups that can work in parallel better.

And once these work items are -- have been produced, they will kind of be reported back to the -- the formal committee who will then take formal action on -- based on the results.

Now, these formal actions can come in various flavors. Typically, to publish the document or to send it to the board or even send it back to the work group if it -- if there are points that need clarifications or so on.

The formal committee also appoints and accepts liaisons from other groups. We currently have three liaisons. Looking at a fourth. I'm coming back to that, too, later.

And another formal thing to do is to elect two co-chairs for -- for the RSSAC.

RSSAC co-chairs is Professor Jun Murai from the WIDE Project -- he is unfortunately not at this meeting here -- and myself. And the other members of the formal committee are these.

Several of them are in the room, so if I can ask the RSSAC members who are here to just stand up to be identified.

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(off microphone.)

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

So these are people who are happy to talk to you about root service.

Since these members are appointed by the board and we have a slight turnover, we have currently three members that are awaiting to be appointed by the board, but that is on the -- on the agenda for this week's board meeting, so we expect that to happen real soon. And it's just a formality.

We also have other regular participants.

We have standing participants from -- from the IANA who perform the actual changes to the root zone, in the form of Elise Gerich.

Elise, are you here? No Elise here, no.

Duane Wessels, from the root zone maintainer. This is -- this happens to be VeriSign, who actually does the technical editing of the zone that's actually transferred to the root server operators.

And we also have staff from the Department of Commerce, from NTIA, who -- who is the IANA functions administrator, and there's a whole set of issues that you can go into for the future of that, but I'm not going to do that here and now.

We still have this system in operation.

And as I mentioned, we also have liaisons to three other groups right now. We have a liaison to the Internet Architecture Board in the form of Marc Blanchet, and to ICANN's Security and Stability Advisory

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Committee, Russ Mundy, and also to the ICANN board of directors, which is Suzanne here to my left.

If you want to read more about this, there is a document published with the link on the slide here that you can -- you can look at, if you want to read more.

So this caucus thing, what's that?

Well, the purpose of the caucus is to gather a pool of experts with wider expertise, to have more angles of input than we ourselves have in the committee. We need to have a critical mass of people with varied expertise, not only for operating authoritative name servers but also from resolver name servers, registry operators, security people. We want a mix there from which we can gain input when we create the documents because we don't have all the expertise ourselves from all -- for all the aspects.

We tried to do this in a transparent way where we want to be public about who's on this group, what type of expertise do they have, which other hats do they wear, which kind of conflicts of interest may be -- may be of interest.

And the -- it will also be a framework for -- for getting the work done.

We don't intend to create an extremely formal framework around the caucus, so it will be focused more on actually producing results, and the formal stuff will be regarding the formal committee who actually does -- takes the actions.

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So this will be a creative group of people who -- who can create the documents.

Principles for the caucus.

All members of the formal committee intend to be members of the caucus, and other people appointed by the committee.

Everyone who wants to join the caucus will have to issue a public statement of interest which will be published, but there is also the notion that if you do work for the caucus, you should also receive the credit for actually having done the work. So that's going to be documented as well.

And if you want to read more details about what the caucus is and how it's designed and so on, there is another document published. Again, a link, if you want to read more.

It will be -- the work for the caucus will have different sources. It could be internally generated within RSSAC -- we identify something that we want to have a closer look at -- or it could be an unsolicited input from somewhere else, most typically from the board of directors but also from other parties and other groups. It's not -- we're not -- it's more important to actually have things to look at and to not -- what's the proper English term? -- to not lock out any issues, so we are actually fairly open to receive input from other groups and other people.

And the procedures will kind of identify -- or will seek to identify clearly scoped work items and will have designated document leaders who will then make sure that the results are reported back to the formal committee.



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I'll ask Kaveh to do an update on the membership committee that we've appointed.

KAVEH RANJBAR:

Hello. My name is Kaveh Ranjbar. I work for the RIPE NCC and I'm in the RSSAC as a secondary person for "K" root. I'm also chair of membership committee.

So there is three of us in the committee. It's caucus membership committee. So that's myself; Paul Vixie, who is not in the room; and Tripti Sinha. She's here.

We have been appointed by the RSSAC as the caucus membership committee. So we were tasked with bootstrapping the caucus by contacting interested parties. We have already contacted all of the old RSSAC list members to join. We have also sent invitations to seven DNS-related mail lists, including three IETF DNS lists, DNS-OARC, and RIPE DNS working group.

To join RSSAC caucus, please send your statement of interest to the email address mentioned, [RSSAC-membership@icann.org](mailto:RSSAC-membership@icann.org), but we have started calling out about 45 days ago and till now we have 16 people applied.

And if you read the procedures, the caucus document, which is actually -- the URL is down there, RSSAC will issue yearly calls for joining caucus, so that will happen every January, and RSSAC will periodically review the composition of RSSAC caucus, basically getting a report from the membership committee and checking that everything is in order.

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So please join the caucus if you think you can add value and if you have time and resources to help, and, yeah, for all the information, it can be found in the caucus document.

I will pass back to Liman.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

Thank you. And I would also like to add that even if you don't feel yourself that you have inputs that you want to give, go home, back to your organizations, and look at your technical people and ask them if they want to join us, because we want people with varied backgrounds.

The plans for the caucus.

We plan to appoint the first set of caucus members by end of June, so that's in roughly a week's time, so that we can get things going properly, and we will conduct a first caucus meeting during the IETF in Toronto in July, a few weeks later.

So that will be a face-to-face meeting where people can get to know each other and we can start creating work teams and get going with the two documents that are most pressing. They actually even have numbers already, RSSAC-001 and 002.

We probably need to create a work party to keep track of the NTIA transition process and whether we may or may not issue documents there. It is still uncharted territory, so we don't know. But we need to be prepared to act if there are things that -- issues where we see that we need to make a statement. Right now we don't know. We don't know how things are going to evolve.

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So we have these documents in the pipe, and we had them for a long time. People have requested information, and the creation of the caucus has dragged on for a long time. So in order to help people who seek the information in these documents, we have decided to publish draft versions of them.

These documents were actually created by the previous generation of RSSAC. They just didn't make it through the final publication stages before the big reorganization started to happen.

So my personal take is that these are pretty much done. They were discussed at length in the previous version of RSSAC, but we still want to have the new caucus have a look at them and review them so that we actually start to use the new processes that we are creating.

So these documents are, indeed, draft documents. You should expect edits, but I would be surprised if there were major edits that would kind of change the content in major ways.

The first one is on service expectations of root servers. What should the Internet community expect from root servers? It turned out when we started to look at this that there are actually several angles of these expectations. One of them is -- has to do with the DNS protocol itself. What is the quality of the data? What's the -- how is it supposed to be formatted? And the other one is more performance related, and it turned out that there are actually different groups of people who are suitable groups for actually setting these expectations.

So we started to work in parallel with the Internet Architecture Board, and they use the IETF process for producing documents. They have a

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document called draft IAB-RFC2870BIS, which is the protocol side of this expectation. And it is supposed to be published in tandem with RSSAC-001 which is the more performance-oriented document.

The other document, RSSAC-022, has its roots in the root scalability investigation that ICANN undertook a couple years ago where a need was identified to -- a need to be able to see trends in the root service. So the important point is to be able to identify if the root server system as a whole suddenly becomes under stress so that it starts to show signs of stress which may lead to service degradation.

And in order to judge whether it is under stress or not, we need to measure some things. And this document is an attempt at listing a few things to measure in these documents. At the root servers, these are fairly simple things like the number of queries or the size of the root zone and things you can measure all the time. And by starting to measure before we have a huge number of new gTLDs, we can establish kind of a baseline from which we can see things grow and accelerate. But if we have the baseline, we know how to reference these measurements.

So we publish this in the hope that the root server operators will adopt this and actually start to measure.

As I said, these documents have been along for quite a while. So this document has been along for -- what is it -- a year and a half by now. And I know that several root server operators have already started to make these measurements and start to collect the statistics. So even though the document isn't formally published as a final document, the

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root server operators are -- at least several of the root server operators are already collecting this information.

So next steps. We have actually a large number of working sessions this week where we will try to make progress on this operational and procedures document. We will try to finalize it to a state where we can publish it or at least make a final round of the mailing list because not everyone in RSSAC is here this week. So we want to really get closure on the things -- the issues that we need to discuss so that we can have that established and use that for our future work.

We also need to take a close look at the NTIA transition process and see where we fit in the scheme and how we're going to relate to it.

We -- we'll in all likelihood be represented on this coordination committee, and we need to also figure out how to keep an eye on what's going on and how to report and how to handle that inside the committee.

We will also work on the caucus formation and plan the future work for the caucus, list work and -- list and prioritize work items so we'll be ready. When the caucus is established, we should already have work items for them to work on.

I think we've reached questions and comments.

ALEJANDRO PISANTY:

Hello, my name is Alejandro Pisanty from the National University of Mexico and the chapter of the Internet Society in Mexico.

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I also -- the reason I'm coming to the microphone is that I have led a couple of -- or taken part in a couple of institutional reviews of ICANN. In particular, I was the chair of a very great team for the stability, security, and resilience review team under the Affirmation of Commitments.

And one of the recommendations we felt we could not -- "feeling" is not a good planning tool. We thought and concluded that we couldn't not make -- as we necessarily had to make was for some specific activities at the root server level and community.

And I just want to convey to you that I am personally very pleased to see the way this is going. I think these are very good steps, and I'm skipping the euphemism of "steps in the right direction" because that may be meaningless.

But I honestly think that this kind of activity that starts some level of -- more collective public-facing activity from the root server communities is very useful, very necessary.

I acknowledge the value of very, very loose coupling in the root server community. And I think this is the kind of level that can be tested. And if it does bring in -- materialize some of the fears that your community has had about creating brittleness, single points of failure, et cetera, it is inductive enough that you can always move away from it to a safer ground. So congratulations.

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

Thank you. Thank you.

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Do you have anything you wanted to add? Any more questions?

No one is worried.

[ Laughter ]

We are -- I will be here for the rest of the week. I believe Suzanne will be here the rest of the week. Several of us will be. If you have any questions that come to mind later in the week, do grab us in the hallways. We are happy to talk to you, and we are here to meet you. So please do talk to us. We try to talk to you.

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(off microphone).

LARS-JOHAN LIMAN:

Yes, again. If you want to join the caucus, we want you to join the caucus because we need people with various aspects of the root service. As our scope is very narrow, we are primarily looking for people with technical backgrounds, but we need technical backgrounds from a variety of fields in the ICANN arena. So as I mentioned, we do need people who work with the resolver side and that's mostly with ISPs, the DNS services within ISPs. And we do need people who work with registry services and then who are security focused as well. So we are happy to receive new members. And please do talk to Kaveh if you are interested or if you know one, someone who might be interested, whom we can reach out to, to encourage them to join us.

If there are no more questions, I will thank you all for coming here. And come talk to us later.

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Thank you.

[ Applause ]

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