02 December 2021

RE: Next Steps in Evolving Root Server System Governance

Ted Hardie
Chair
Root Server System Governance Working Group

Dear Ted,

On behalf of the ICANN Board, I would like to thank you and the Root Server System Governance Working Group (GWG) for your work since early 2020. We especially acknowledge the dedication and patience of the GWG and your leadership as chair.

The ICANN Board supports evolving root server system (RSS) governance based on RSSAC037. In our previous correspondence, the ICANN Board noted its support for GWG efforts to achieve consensus outcomes that implement enhanced RSS governance and root server operator (RSO) accountability. The ICANN Board convened the GWG for this purpose.

As you know, the RSOs recently developed a set of success criteria for RSS governance. The RSSAC published the success criteria as RSSAC058 and provided related advice in RSSAC059. The ICANN Board welcomed the development of success criteria as valuable input to evolve RSS governance. On 18 November 2021, the ICANN Board accepted Recommendations 1 and 2 from RSSAC059. As a result, the ICANN Board directs the GWG to incorporate the success criteria from RSSAC058 into its work.

The ICANN Board has been closely following the work of the GWG, particularly through our liaisons to the GWG. I understand that the current GWG proposal presents an alternative for evolving RSS governance that appears to diverge from RSSAC037. The ICANN Board anticipates that as the GWG work continues, updates to the proposal will more closely align with RSSAC037 and the success criteria clarified in RSSAC058.

This is a critical juncture for the GWG. Recognizing the five-month pause against the existing GWG timeline, the ICANN Board encourages the GWG to consider its membership and work plan and adjust accordingly for ICANN Board review. The ICANN Board is ready to work with the GWG and commits that ICANN org will continue supporting GWG efforts. As the membership and work plan are updated, the ICANN Board wishes to stress the importance of accountability and transparency in this multistakeholder effort. The ICANN Board also maintains a unique role after GWG work is complete in considering the proposal alongside the inputs from the ICANN community and the stakeholders most impacted by our action.

Evolving RSS governance is not easy, and the GWG serves an important role. We look forward to the GWG building on its strong beginning, strengthening its relationships with RSS stakeholders within the design process, and delivering a proposal that allows us to move

forward together. The ICANN Board again thanks the GWG for your continued work within the ICANN multistakeholder model, which is crucial to addressing the growing external, governmental, and regulatory pressures on the RSS.

Best regards,

Maarten Botterman
Chair, ICANN Board of Directors

CC   Akinori Maemura, ICANN Board Alternate Liaison to the GWG
       Göran Marby, ICANN President and CEO
       David Olive, ICANN Senior Vice President, Policy Development Support
       Tripti Sinha, ICANN Board Liaison to the GWG
       RSOs via Fred Baker, RSSAC Chair, and Brad Verd, RSSAC Vice Chair