
MARRAKECH – GAC Commonwealth Members Meeting
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ICANN55 | Marrakech, Morocco

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Good afternoon. It's 12:45. We are 15 minutes behind schedule. I'd like to welcome you all to this very short meeting. It's one of those meetings that...

...and I hope the next 30 minutes we should be out of here. First of all, let me introduce, on my left Mark Carvel who is from the UK government and he does coordinate the views of the UK government and also he will be providing us with the status of things the last few days. To my right, I've deliberately requested Bernadette Lewis who is the Secretary General of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union whose members are also members of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization. So I'm sure she will have a few things to say.

There are basically two or three issues on the agenda. One is to brief you on the strategic plan which the CTO has adopted in the last one or two weeks, and Mark will provide you with the updates on the high-level meeting that was held yesterday. And then we'll have some discussions on some of the issues which will have been raised.

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Now in terms of the strategic plan, I assumed office about five months ago, and I did outline to the Council the vision that I had and the Council authorized me now to recruit the consultants so as to elaborate on the plan. We published a request for proposals from consultants globally and after evaluation we selected Philip Cross who is a U.S.-based consultant from Jamaica. He used to be head of the Caribbean at the ITU. So he assisted us to elaborate on the plan.

I'm particularly happy that we have a fairly good representation here. I know the Commonwealth has representation from different continents so we have Africa that's visibly here, we have the Caribbean that's also visibly here, we have Europe, we have Canada just come in, and we have Asia. So I'm very pleased that we have a fairly good representation.

So I'll just run through the new strategic plan which was adopted by the Executive Council and currently that plan has been submitted to Council members for endorsement, so I do hope that before the end of this year that plan will become effective 1st of April.

CTO is the oldest Commonwealth Organization in ICTs and it might interest you that we are celebrating our 115th anniversary this year, so we've been there for quite a long time. It has evolved over the years. In 1967 it became an inter-government

outreach organization. Our members spread [inaudible] Commonwealth and beyond. We have adopted a structure that allows non-Commonwealth members to be part of the CTO. Currently we do have members from governments, from regulators, from civil society, from private sector, and recently we have introduced a new category of membership – the academia, because we believe they have a lot of things that they can contribute to us. We’ve also introduced associate consultants because increasingly we have been asked to do a lot of things which we will not be able to accommodate within the substructure we have. So we are currently identifying potential associate consultants who can work with us. And quite a number of them have already been working with us, but we just need to formalize the arrangements.

Like I said, we’ve been there for over 100 years spread out. One of our key strengths is capacity building, and we do that on a number of issues – broadband, cybersecurity, spectrum, regulatory issues, ICT applications, and so on. We adopted a vision statement that we want to be a trusted partner for sustainable development for all through ICTs. The focus for us is that one, we looked at the strengths, secondly we examine the SDGs that were adopted by the UN General Assembly last December, and we tried to draw from there the key elements on ICTs. I will just show you three of those issues.

Okay, before I get to that let me just highlight the six goals that we have in terms of the strategic plan.

One is to enhance our membership – by the way, there is free coffee there and tea and some things to nibble. One is to enhance our membership value. We have currently introduced what we call a Member Action Plan whereby we are involved in an agreement between the CTO and every single member, be they government or sector member. And that draft is currently being discussed by various countries in terms of the action plan. And most of the countries have really reacted positively to that.

Secondly, we are promoting enabling regulatory environments. We are organizing conferences on spectrum, for example. We have three Regulatory Board workshops where Chairman of Board, members of Boards, senior officials of governments, they come and interact with us. We also give them the opportunity to interact with our host regulator OFCOM as well as the British Telecom. And that gives a very broad experience in terms of what the whole ICT is all about.

Then we also have as a third goal to promote affordable universal and high quality broadband connectivity, as we've heard many times there are some 3–4 billion people are yet to be connected and the Commonwealth has quite a number of

unconnected citizens. We want to promote connectivity across the Commonwealth.

Fourthly, we want to promote the culture of cybersecurity and effective cyber governments. I can say with pride that we have had a lot of good support from the UK government and through the support they've given us, we have been able to assist Uganda, Botswana, Cameroon, and lately Nigeria in terms of their strategies, in terms of their policies of cybersecurity. The government of Fiji just signed an agreement with us to assist them also in their cybersecurity plans, and we are currently working with the UK government on a big European Commission work which hopefully we will be doing with these other countries in southern Africa.

Then number five, we want to promote use and development of ICT applications for health, for agriculture, for virtually in every sector of the economy.

And finally, which is perhaps one of my very important focus, is to ensure effective coordination of Commonwealth countries at international ICT conferences.

Now let me expand on these quite a bit, because that's very key to me. One of the things that's happened is that, in preparing for global conferences we find that many developing countries have not had the right exposure to be able to prepare for these

conferences. If you look at this ICANN meeting, for example, the participation of developing countries is very, very low. If you listen to one of the presentations, one of the reports said that the participation of coming to this meeting was about 7% in Africa, about 8% in Latin America and Caribbean countries, and we felt there is a need to assist many of our members who need the capacity development. So we've adopted a scheme whereby before any global conference, we have a preparatory meeting to educate our members, to compare notes, and when I talk about [fees] I found that that was one of the first things I had to do, and I convened a meeting of the Commonwealth countries in London and we looked at the positions of the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia on every single agenda item for the world [media] conference. And we discussed amongst ourselves, we looked at the differences, we looked at the common proposals, and where there were differences we discussed, we were able to educate ourselves why did Asia take a point of view different from Africa on a particular agenda item? Why was Europe going a particular way?

After those three days, we were able to come to a consensus and the good thing for me was that the consensus which we reached actually reflected the decisions of the conference [into the right itself]. And I was really excited with that. We had a meeting every week, we had countries that offered to champion certain issues.

One of the most critical issues was global flight tracking and we had a gentleman from Canada who offered to coordinate and that really changed the whole thing within the conference. It really helped. We also had other issues on UHF, which was championed by the UK. Again, what we decided at that preparatory meeting mirrored itself at the final conference.

So at this meeting we also did the same thing, we are coordinating a meeting where to share our views. In Brazil where we had the last IGF we did the same thing and we want this to be a continuous process. And later on we'll talk about how and the plans we have a stand-alone Commonwealth IGF.

Internally, we have some goals, the ones I showed at the [XML] goals. Internally, we are [reviewing] our internal structure and we are also developing a modern communication plan. Today we now publish on a monthly basis an e-Commonwealth magazine, and if you have not been receiving it, since we have your contact, you'll be receiving it every month.

Like I said, the plan on the [effective] coordination within the ITU, the ITU is going to have a conference at the end of this year, for example, on standards. So we will be convening the Commonwealth meeting to prepare countries for that conference. Same we're doing here at ICANN and the Internet Governance Forum.

I've mentioned all these efforts that we are undertaking and we are trying also to encourage our countries to understand the discussion of the transition of the IANA Stewardship. You'll notice from this meeting the absence of many of other countries. I was able to speak to a few ministers and the one question they were asking me was, "How can you help to get officials educated on the issues that are involved?" And the one concern they have is the government participation. How do you assure, how do we ensure that governments are assured that there are concerns, their input should be taken into account in the new structure? And I think that's one of the things that we need to look at.

We have also decided to set up a website for this work and I'm happy that the UK government also is supporting us on that. The link is there. And like I said, we will have a stand-alone IGF very soon in order to coordinate the various plans. If you click you get that on the website and it has all the information at your disposal.

To achieve this goal, we are going to recruit a dedicated officer to be looking at these issues, whether it's to do with ICANN or to do with spectrum, we need to have somebody who'll be looking after these issues for us.

So in essence, the goal is to deliver the value of the Commonwealth across the globalization agenda. So that will

end my short presentation. I will now call on Mark to give us some highlights on what has happened the last few days, before we go into discussion. Thank you. Mark.

MARK CARVEL:

Thank you very much, Shola. And appreciate very much such a good, strong, and diverse turnout for this meeting in the lunch break. It's much appreciated. It's tough going, this meeting. We started...well, the GAC started on Saturday and I was here on Friday for an all-day CCWG meeting, so it seems like it's never ending but it's great to see so many of you here sacrificing your time in the lunch break to join us, so we'll try not to detain you as we're only halfway through the day and there's much more to be done.

Before I just touch on key developments I just want first of all to express my appreciation of the UK government to the CTO for undertaking so much valuable work in raising the profile of the Commonwealth here at ICANN through convening this Commonwealth meeting of GAC representatives and advisors and so on within the ICANN community and also at the IGF. I was personally very privileged to assist Shola with the sessions in João Pessoa in Brazil at the last IGF with respect to Commonwealth interests and Commonwealth initiatives relating to Internet policy, Internet governance, and so on.

It's great and it's good news certainly – excellent news to hear that we are relaunching the Commonwealth IGF website. That was initially facilitated by COMNET in Malta. CTO has taken over. That helped raise the visibility for the Commonwealth's initiatives on Child Protection and became the platform for launching the Commonwealth Cybercrime Initiative, which I'm sure many of you are familiar with. A very successful initiative which is still building capacity in several Commonwealth states. So it's great news on that front. And as I say, the CTO is providing invaluable support and facilitation for these important initiatives.

So where are we during the course of this meeting? Well, we've just had yesterday, as I'm sure you're well aware, the high-level governmental meeting. My minister was here and several other ministers and senior officials from Commonwealth member states were able to take part and take the floor, and it was I think broadly a very successful event. If you were at the GAC meeting when the Moroccan GAC representative gave his initial reflections on how the high-level governmental meeting went, he emphasized the strong degree of attendance. It was a very well-attended meeting – he quoted the figure 85, and I think that means 85 governments represented by ministers and senior officials. I think in total about 25 ministers, so that's very impressive. The Moroccan Ministry put a lot of effort into

facilitating a very successful event. I was able to assist in some way because the UK, as many of you will know, hosted the previous one two years ago.

So I think that was the third one yesterday. I think this is a model that has proved extremely valuable for bringing government representatives at the political level, at the high cabinet level, into direct contact with this community in ICANN and engaging on issues that are having an impact on the critical infrastructure of the Internet worldwide, that impacts on all our policies with respect to digital economies, cybersecurity, all of the elements – the strategic plan that the CTO has which many aspects of that are very relevant to the work here.

So my minister was pleased – Ed Vaizey. He felt he had been able to convey the importance of that forum, the high-level governmental meeting to bring focus and see ICANN in action and to network. I had to run around the whole day with him, introducing him to people and that triggers discussions and new ideas and so on, so it's very important and we hope the fourth one, presumably in another two years time, will help build on this as a model that reinforces the implementation of the transition – that's the other key issue, of course that is at center stage.

My advice to Ed Vaizey was, “Well, we’re almost there. We’re 99% done. The main proposal was ready back in October. We’ve just got to finalize the accountability dependencies relating to the naming proposal, and most of that is agreed and discussed.” And we have had discussions and I think we’re close to signing this off as the Governmental Advisory Committee is one of the chartering organizations of the Cross Community Working Group. We’re close to that. We just have to get the formulations right because, as you know, there’s a minority statement expressing concerns about elements of the proposal, specifically recommendation 11. We’ve had arguments, discussions...okay, we can go with that...okay, give ground on that...but we’re not actually there in terms of a final answer. We’ve got to work on that. And as you know from the exchange, we’ve just had in the GAC, we’re not even agreeing on how to do it. But hopefully we’ll sort that out pretty quickly, because the time pressure is on.

What hasn’t been mentioned is what’s going to happen in the U.S., because if this slips beyond this week that can throw all the timetables out, because the Congressional hearings need to take place before Congress breaks up and so it needs to get to NTIA, it needs to be reviewed by them, the Congressional committees need to have a chance before they break up for the summer. If it goes beyond that into September, if we don’t adhere to that or help the U.S. side adhere to that deadline, then

it will be caught up in the presidential elections and, to be frank, who knows what will happen. Who knows. There'll be pressures on both sides from the Democrats, they will say, "Maybe this is too complex. Let's park it and come back to it later if we win." Maybe on the Trump and Cruz side it'll become even more very, very turbulent, shall I put it that way, between these four tent curtains, if not walls. So the pressure is on.

I don't want to detain you with any more analysis, but I hope very much the GAC can continue, but if anybody's got comments on the process, on what's the likely way forward, I'd be happy to try and help them. I've been closely involved in the CCWG work, I've stayed up late for long conference calls – I haven't done all of them, 90 or whatever it is – but I've been tracking this pretty closely. I'm not a member of the CCWG, but I've been a participant so that has enabled me to chip in and engage in the process throughout. So I hope that helps in setting the scene in where we are and, as I say, if anybody does have any questions or additional reflections or concerns, I'd be very interested to hear. Thank you, Shola.

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Good Thank you very much, Mark. Before we start the discussions, I'd just like Bernadette to ask one or two things. For those of you who were here late, Bernadette is the Secretary

General of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union and all of us are members of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization.

BERNADETTE LEWIS: Thank you very much, Shola, and good afternoon to everyone. I just wanted to congratulate the CTO on their strategic plan. I think it's going to take you very far in the work that has to be done and I also want to just bring to the attention, we have an MoU, the CTO and the CTU, we have an MoU for cooperation and I want to stress the value of cooperation and collaboration, not just between organizations, between governments and individuals. Sharing of information is very powerful, and Shola and I have actually committed to share and collaborate on many of the things that have been identified in the strategic plan, and I am taking this opportunity – it's a little late, but this is the first time I've actually seen Shola since his appointment – to congratulate him on his appointment and I'm looking forward to a very close working relationship between the CTO and the CTU. I thank you.

SHOLA TAYLOR: Thank you very much. So the floor is open. Questions. How do you want us to help you better? What role do you think the CTO or the Commonwealth can play? Yes, please introduce yourself.

TAHIR SHAH: This is Tahir Shah, I'm Pakistan. Pakistan is one of the member of the CTO. Thanks, [inaudible] for allowing me to speak some words about the Commonwealth work. I especially thanks the UK government for the facilitation to CTO [particularly] for the website development and I appreciate the efforts of the CTO management for the future strategic planning. I think CTO is working on the right direction and they've selected suitable priority areas like cybersecurity and ICT and disability and ICT for and youth. It's a very appreciable priority areas.

There is one my suggestion that CTO may have some sort of shared repository of the ICT application policy document so that the member's country may take benefit from the experience of each other. Thank you.

SHOLA TAYLOR: Thank you. Yes, Tracy.

TRACY HACKSHAW: Yes. I just wanted to say that one thing I discovered with this accountability process is that maybe the members of the Commonwealth might need a little more briefing than perhaps what the GAC might be doing, some specific what it means for your country or your region and so on. I'm wondering if, now

that we have the CIGF platform available and I think the Facebook site is also back up, that could be an opportunity to start sharing probably briefs or maybe regional briefs – I don't want to sound too specific, but – so what does the accountability and transition mean for Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific, Europe, and Canada, and perhaps – I'm not sure if there's any resources, but – translation. I know that's been a challenge for many of the countries in the Underserved Regions Working Group which I co-Chair that we have been talking about that as well, so there may be an opportunity to collaborate and to get some of that information out so that the members can participate more readily in the discussions one, but certainly understand exactly what it means and perhaps avoid simply just supporting or not supporting based on other issues but what does it mean for the region, for your particular country. Thank you.

SHOLA TAYLOR: Thank you. Tracy is from Trinidad and Tobago, He didn't introduce himself. Yes.

TEMITOPE FASHEDEMI: Thank you very much. I'm Tope Fashedemi, I'm from Nigeria. Once again, to congratulate you on the plan and especially the point about effective coordination of the Commonwealth

countries. I think that speaks to what Tracy just remarked about. But more to the point on the issue of the CCWG and what you pointed out about the timelines and the risks. I think everybody appreciates that, but more importantly is for the pro “let’s move on” group to appreciate where the minority statement is coming from. And I think I would have thought that it’s a critical opportunity to bring everybody on board, but it seems the opposite is going on and all that is stemming from the item 4 in the preliminary conditions set by NTIA, and from where I’m standing I think it’s been misinterpreted. Because what that statement said was about not handing over the process to a government-led organization or a multi-government-led organization.

And I think it’s pretty clear. From the get-go, ICANN is not a government-led organization. The government, if you will, are only one segment of the multi-stakeholder group already, so put it in place a system that is now demanding more or, if you will, whittling down the influence of the GAC in a system that is already compartmentalized the government in an area exactly the same level if not less than other stakeholder group. It’s what is causing this.

I give a simple example of what is happening right now is the .africa. So if you have a system where all the countries of Africa have signed off on something and an individual from the

business constituency can hold all the government to ransom for over two years and then the governments have diligently gone through the URDP system of ICANN diligently for two years and at the end of it ICANN itself, having gone through that process, agrees that they are right but still no resolution. So that speaks a lot. So that's only the current system. If we can now go forward to where the proposals are going then what's going to happen? We're now in the situation where you [heard] yesterday, government of India talking about 400 million people on the Internet, China talking about 800 million people. In Nigeria we have over 90 million people and we're getting to a point where people are beginning to say that Internet access – not even Internet access, broadband access – is no longer something that especially is going to become a human right for the government to make available whether anybody likes it or not and at the same time you don't want government to have any say? I think it's wrong. So is the other side, the mainstream side really needed to take the opportunity [is a little] ask and then everybody will have moved forward pretty quickly. So I think if this can be put into perspective I think it will make life really easy for everybody. Thank you.

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Thank you. I was going to get all the comments first, but you made a very important statement that requires some kind of

immediate response so I'll call on Mark and then others to respond. It's very critical.

MARK CARVEL:

Yes. Thank you, Shola. And thank you for raising this indeed very important and critical issue. The .africa experience is a terrible one. It's a very unacceptable one. We would all agree on that. Well we have to learn from that experience and hopefully the resolution will be immediate and, really in practical terms. But we learned from that experience, and we have Nigel Hickson here from ICANN and maybe he wants to comment, too, on this. I don't know.

My sense of how things are changing in association with transition is going to obviate that kind of thing happening the future. And there is a decompartmentalization happening. The GAC, in the past and when I first joined the GAC it was all about, "What are we going to say to the Board?" And it was all very small group, closed meetings – this was 2008 – and completely different from what we are now, but we have more things to do and the key evolutionary factor for the GAC is what I call "transversal working" within this ICANN community so that we can be alert to public interest concerns.

At the first stage of any policy development process initiating through the work that we've done with the GNSO, through the

consultation group, the GAC GNSO Consultation Group on interaction on policy development throughout the process. So that, I think, is going to be a big change for us and it has resource and capacity implications for us which we must look at and consider how are we going to participate in these processes. There's going to be some discussion about this later on.

So there's that and transition. The UK view is that transition actually enhances the role of governments in an advisory capacity, because that's what the proposal says. We will be there in terms of decisional participation through providing advice. Decisions does not mean just object, support, abstain. It also means advice, and that's where I see the GAC also decompartmentalizing, if you like.

So that's my initial take. But there's a lot of work to be done and nothing's perfect, yet certainly. But we'll try to get it right, and there is an implementation phase to getting things perfectly right, to fine tune things I think. We won't be able to overturn stuff in the proposal, but the implementation is also key for the GAC to continue. Thanks.

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mark. Yes, please.

KHALED FATTAL:

Khaled Fattal, the Multilingual Internet Group. I want to draw on the comments of previous speakers and also on your strategic plan. I've had the opportunity to work with the CTO before and I'm actually pleased with some of the key points that you put in into your strategic plan. But before I dig into them I want to draw a picture for everybody to get it into their mind. And excuse the example – If somebody walked in now with a gun, we know there's an immediate threat. If we were [locked] thinking about the weather forecast and how it's going to impact us, we will start thinking about maybe getting an umbrella for tomorrow or maybe wearing a raincoat. And I think not just the Commonwealth, but the global community needs leadership on solutions. And here I distinguish between what might be nice to have versus what's going to be impactful. And I draw to the point that you have in your strategic plan – the cybersecurity. And on that, I also draw on the cybersecurity as a term that's been used for the last 30 – 40 years and it's no surprise that many people still treat it as [lack] cybersecurity. And there's very little distinction as to how the threats are impacting stakeholders at national and corporate level. And there needs to be a distinction.

So we have the conventional threats, which is everything we see, but we also have the new...what we label as the political cyber threats. And they are actually impacting infrastructures and

natural resources and corporations. If we as organizations – as you asked what the advice we would give you – if organizations like the CTO, like CTU, are interested in thought-leading those members and those stakeholders on what they need to do that is of immediate impact to them today, then a clear distinction in cybersecurity threats and how they impact them needs to be provided to them and solutions so that they can be better.

At the end of the day, even at national level, there are opportunities to develop competitive advantages. Those nations that do better make their country and their stakeholders more competitive in the digital world, and that's also an opportunity. For those who don't want to, you know what? God takes care of everybody. That's my point.

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Thank you very much. For those of you who may not be aware, next month we are organizing a cybersecurity conference and we will try to encourage those who cannot come to London to follow up online. So check our website on that. Any other comments? Yes, Mary.

MARY UDUMA:

Good afternoon. My name is Mary from Nigeria, and I had [meeting GAC] and other people that are in GAC. We also play in

other constituencies and I have always advocated that this meeting should not be limited to GAC Commonwealth members. Other constituencies should come in. Speaking from the country code Top-Level Domain I don't know I think it is the right time that we look at what we should do as these group will do to encourage members that first whether they have their TLD delegated to them first and whether they understand the process whether also they understand the business in the Domain Name business and what the develop the legacy the old ones like UK or Australia or Canada could do to bring up the small ccTLDs.

In ccTLD process we are varied in the approach and operation. Some are totally government, others are totally private, others are for non-profit. So the Commonwealth may also look at where, how, and why [issues have] those ccTLDs . Participation will not be effective or visible if we don't even understand the process. And I like the fact that Shola is proposing a pre-meeting meeting whenever we come so that we'll have the same, we have common understanding. Outreaches plus education plus encouragement and exchanges.

What helped me when I first started in ccTLD was that I was able to go to the UK and I spent about three days there. They told me what they were doing so it helped so much. So ccTLDs like the big ones could also take small exchange and develop the young

ones so that we can also come up. And when we come up we will be able to contribute effectively. We'll be able to also participate effectively. So participation and contribution, both of them can only happen where you understand the process. If you don't you don't. Thanks.

SHOLA TAYLOR: Thank you very much. We have about five minutes left. Yes, please.

JUSTIN RUGNDIHENE Thank you, Chair. My name is Justin Rugondihene. I am the Director of [inaudible] Communication Technology in Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority and I am the Representative of Rwanda in GAC. I have two points. Maybe [currently] GAC there are some discussion which are going on [inaudible] is what you call Stress Test 18. Sometimes those kind of issues require a harmonized position. Maybe my suggestion is maybe if the Commonwealth within the Commonwealth can be kind of framework where Commonwealth countries harmonize position on some critical issues and that discussion in ICANN. That is my point.

The second one, African countries we don't have enough participation in ICANN meetings, while in ITU there is already an

increased participation. So maybe when there is a meeting in Council Working Group in ICANN discussing on issue of Internet Governance, African countries they have... in ITU, yes. But coming back to ICANN, the presence is not enough. So that is coming maybe from mindset... African countries have the mindset that they should give priority to ITU or discussion on Internet Governance in ITU and ignore all these opinions in ICANN. I think discussion is even in ICANN is more important than in the IT because the future of Internet Governance is discussed here.

So my request may be to Commonwealth is just to see how is to advocate maybe to those countries who have a mindset or who don't give importance to ICANN meetings just to advocate for us. Being in high-level meeting for Commonwealth or being in another framework that maybe you know better than me. Thank you for giving me the floor.

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Thank you very much. Yes, before I give the floor to you, Gloria from Uganda, you want to say something? Since you're also from government you've been active on ICANN.

GLORIA KEMBABAZI: Thank you very much First of all I would like to thank the CTO for the work they are doing in Uganda. We appreciate it, especially on the cybersecurity and the framework that we've come up with. I would like to throw back what he has said back to us. We are the future, we are the representation of our government so when you go back, you're talking to your heads of department, you're talking to your ministers, what are taking back? We have to make sure that we bring them to the floor to understand that ICANN is very key and very important. We are using the Internet for socioeconomic development and that is our future. That is the future of our countries, so I think the onus is back to us. Thank you very much.

SHOLA TAYLOR: Thank you. Yes, please.

JAMES [JEROGA]: Thank you. My name is James [Jeroga]. I'm from Nairobi, Kenya. I'm sorry I've come into this meeting late, but I think I have to catch up with what have been going on. But going with what my sister has just mentioned about being representative of a government back home... I'm sorry, first things first. I wanted to know whether the CTO have an office in African countries. Like for example, like in my country. Yesterday during the opening session we heard that ICANN is going to open a communication

center in Nairobi. If you people have a communications center, let's say like in Nairobi or any other part of African countries, it's good for us to be well-informed so as to know where we can get information [required].

About taking back the information to our governments, remember some of us are not even anywhere close to the government, we are civil societies and the government takes any information from a person like me they even don't know whether I'm here, they don't care. I don't think it is simple for some of us to take message back home. But with your support and proper information, I think we can get somewhere. That's my point.

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Thank you very much. Let me just draw on what the gentleman from Rwanda and a response from Uganda. I think what's the lady from Uganda was saying it's up to us. Let me tell you what I experienced. Yesterday evening I was invited by the Civil Society and Prime Minister of Nigeria to a dinner they hosted for the [inaudible] Secretary of the Minister of Communications. Very interesting. They hosted him and that one-hour dinner turned into something else. The [inaudible] Secretary concluded that, wow, there is some real work to be done. He listened.

And I think if this sort of thing could be done the [Prime Minister] should not wait for government to do things. Engage governments. And that's what I discovered yesterday. It was just one hour 30 minutes and it was a very useful exchange of views where the government representative took certain things on board and decided that they now begin have to do things differently. So it started off as ICANN doing something for us, we also have to take the initiative. The center with the Africa.com there are issues with that. At the end of the day, both sides have their arguments and we as the CTO have committed to do certain things privately to ensure that our problems are resolved. Because I don't want that experience to discourage the Africans to start going [against] the transition. It's important that we have confidence, trust, in the new system that's coming up. And that issue must be resolved as soon as possible. We are going to take steps to make sure it's resolved.

With regards to whether we have presence, we have presence everywhere. Just go to our website, we're there. So we are there in Nairobi through the online system. Nigel is here from ICANN. I'm sure he wants to say one or two things. Thank you.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you very much, Shola. I'm Nigel Hickson. I work in the Government Engagement team in ICANN, and in ICANN the

Commonwealth is a bit of a difficult vehicle because it's nowhere, if you see what I mean. The Commonwealth doesn't fit in any one region, so we look after it from Geneva which seems appropriate I suppose, but it's really good having a relationship with the Commonwealth. It's really good having a relationship with the CTO, and I think this initiative is excellent and thank you, Shola, for your leadership on this.

I'm not going to comment on .africa because you know the facts better than we do. All I can say is that when the news came in of the latest problem in terms of the filing of a Restriction Order in the U.S. Courts, there were many of us that were just as disappointed as you were because it would have been so nice to be able to have a positive message on .africa. Well, I think we have a positive message, but it would have been so nice to conclude that particular issue.

On the wider issues of the IANA transition, obviously you've discussed in detail and you've heard all the discussions. All I think I would say is that in the years that I've been working at ICANN and before that in government, this has been a... the issue of the US sovereignty over part of the root of the Internet has been such an important issue for governments. I think as civil servants we all face difficulties in explaining to our ministers why there was this U.S. link. However, this link was never abused, but that was the first question of ministers, "What have

they done to it?” and we said, “Well, it’s never been abused,” but it is a link to the U.S. and how that affects national sovereignty, of course, is very important. So we certainly hope the transition will go ahead. It’s a compromise. Not everyone has got what they wanted, but there’s more work to do, there’s implementation work, there’s another Work Stream 2 on Accountability which I hope people will be involved in. And thank you for the governments that have been involved in this process. Thank you.

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Thank you, Nigel. Any other burning issues? Mark? Thank you.

MARK CARVEL:

Thanks. Just a reminder that there are still Commonwealth members who are not on the GAC, so anything people around the table and our contacts can do to close off this gap in Commonwealth participation in ICANN through the Governmental Advisory Committee would be much appreciated. The countries are Bangladesh, Belize, Guyana, Lisutu, Maldives , Saint Kitts, and Saint Vincent. So seven to go. The number is coming down. Antigua was a recent joiner I remember at the last meeting. So yes, please broadcast the importance of joining the GAC and participating in all these key issues including transition,

implementation, Work Stream 2, as Nigel touched on. A lot of work to be done and we all need to be involved. Thanks.

SHOLA TAYLOR:

Yes. Thank you very much. For Bangladesh I did engage two ministers just two weeks ago, and the problem is to look at the issue. Because back home they have a lot of issues on Internet, so they're a bit skeptical about what's happening. But we're engaging them. That's quite important.

Just to round off, I'd like to thank every one of you for coming here. We didn't provide lunch, we provide what in the UK they call nibbles, and I hope you enjoyed it.

Secondly, I did mention that we are in the process of recruiting someone who can do this coordinational work for us at the CTO. So if you are aware of some young, dynamic, man or woman who'd be ready to do this task, we are prepared to consider. So send us CVs, and thank God we have a website which is there. We are going to be updating it so that it's more active, and we will have that person coordinate the activities more.

Finally, we are also planning to have a stand-alone Commonwealth IGF. We're still discussing with potential which countries. So if you think you are in a position to host , please let us know. There's a country that has expressed interest but we

haven't concluded, and we are always open to discussion with any country that's interested.

Finally, let me thank Bernadette for being here. Thank you very much. And definitely our collaboration will continue. And Mark, you've done quite well. We appreciate. ICANN, we always appreciate your support. You were saying doesn't know where to place us. Well that's a good one. We are everywhere. We are in Africa. Actually, the last ICANN, the African decided to come with us to have a meeting if you recall in Dublin. It was an African Commonwealth meeting which was very good.

And, by the way also, one of the strategies that I have is that I'm expanding the Commonwealth and very soon you hear the Gabon. A French-speaking country may like to be a member of the Commonwealth, because I believe that we are not going to limit it to English-speaking countries.

Oh, sorry. A member of the CTO. But I also tell you one thing, even though I should not say this, the President of Gabon said to somebody, "[Cameron] is bilingual. They're getting benefit from both sides. What's wrong with us?" That's what the President of Gabon said. And that actually gives us the impetus to encourage the telecom community, the ICT community to be part of Commonwealth.

So on this note, thank you very much. I welcome my friend from Bermuda. First time we have seen them here. I hope you have something to take back home and be part of us. Well, thank you. And who took the notes? Yes, I have this gentleman at the [inaudible] who has volunteered to take some notes and he will send you some notes thereafter. Thank you very much. Have a nice afternoon.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]