GNSO gTLD Registries Constituency Statement

Issue: **ICANN Travel Support Policy**

Date: 16 April 2008

General Registries Constituency (RyC) Information

- Total # of eligible RyC Members: 15
- Total # of RyC Members: 15
- Total # of Active RyC Members[1]: 15
- Minimum requirement for supermajority of Active Members: 10
- Minimum requirement for majority of Active Members: 8
- # of Members that participated in this process: 15
- Names of Members that participated in this process: 15

- Names & email addresses for points of contact:
    - Chair: David Maher, dmaher@pir.org
    - Vice Chair: Jeff Neuman, Jeff.Neuman@Neustar.us
    - Secretariat: Cherie Stubbs, Cherstubbs@aol.com
    - RyC rep. for this statement: Ray Fassett, ray@goto.jobs

Regarding the issue noted above, the following position represents the views of the ICANN GNSO gTLD Registries Constituency as indicated. Unless indicated otherwise, the RyC position was arrived at through a combination of RyC email list discussion and RyC meetings (including teleconference meetings).

Summary of voting:

Total Eligible Members: 15

In Support: **10**
Non-Support: **0**

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[1] Per the RyC Articles of Operations, Article III, Membership, ¶ 4: Members shall be classified as "Active" or "Inactive". A member shall be classified as "Active" unless it is classified as "Inactive" pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph. Members become Inactive by failing to participate in a Constituency meeting or voting process for a total of three consecutive meetings or voting processes or both, or by failing to participate in meetings or voting processes, or both, for six weeks, whichever is shorter. An Inactive member shall have all rights and duties of membership other than being counted as present or absent in the determination of a quorum. An Inactive member may resume Active status at any time by participating in a Constituency meeting or by voting.

Non-Voting: **5**

Level of Support of Active Members:

1. **Position Description**:

This statement pertains to ICANN's Request for Comment on how it can create a documented, consistent policy to make it clear when, for whom, and how ICANN will provide travel support for the wide range of volunteers who make ICANN's community-based work possible.

I. Constituency Position

The Registries Constituency (RyC) both supports and believes in ICANN's constituency driven model. As ICANN continues to succeed and mature in its role as the technical coordinator of certain matters of the DNS that impact all users of the Internet, it is reasonable to continually pose the question of how it can improve and further encourage bottom up participation into its policy initiatives.

Considering the fact that ICANN's operating budget has increased materially year over year during its past few fiscal periods, it is probably natural for members of the community to look to this as a vehicle to fund community participation. Travel expense is the primary barrier to regular, in-person attendance at ICANN public meetings. On the surface, it is natural to ask the question: Should there be a budgetary commitment by ICANN to reimburse travel expense of individuals to facilitate their physical attendance at ICANN public meetings?

The RyC thinks that ICANN staff is asking the right questions, which include:

1. When should ICANN provide travel support?
2. Who should ICANN provide travel support for?
3. How should ICANN provide travel support?

In general the RyC does not support a direct appeal to ICANN's operating budget for expense reimbursement to individuals for their in-person attendance at ICANN public meetings[2]. This includes travel expense. Instead, we believe each constituency has both an opportunity and an obligation to determine "when, who, and how" it will participate in ICANN public meetings. While we carry the opinion that in-person attendance is not a "must" in order for any given constituency to effectuate ICANN policy, more importantly than this, we believe that expense reimbursement to individual representatives for in-person attendance is best placed at the constituency

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[2] It is our assumption for this document that ICANN's request for input pertains to its public meetings only and not inter-sessional meetings that may arise from time to time.

level. In short, our position is that the "who, when, and how" questions are best placed at the constituency level rather than at the ICANN staff or Board level.

We think the issue might better be placed as: How can ICANN's operating budget be of greater support and encouragement to constituency participation at ICANN public meetings without compromising the autonomy each constituency carries within the ICANN constituency driven model?

The RyC supports ICANN's allocation and investment toward methods of effective remote, real time participation. We believe use of ICANN funds for this purpose to be in the best interests of its constituency members. Successful accomplishment of this objective will lessen the perceived need for in-person attendance on the one hand and encourage individuals that do not have the means or ability to travel to participate nearly as fully (if not equally) as those in physical attendance at ICANN public meetings. Reliable remote participation tools should be a higher priority than reimbursing travel expenses because there are other reasons besides costs that limit in-person participation. These tools should not be limited to reliable phone lines and conferencing equipment (e.g., sound quality without interruptions) but should also include tools like web conferencing tools, voice over IP capabilities, etc., to ensure remote participation is not just possible but effective.

To address the "who, when, and how" questions, we believe each constituency best knows which ICANN related policy matters are most important to their interests at any given time. Thus, it is the constituency that is best able to determine "for whom" travel support should be provided. The RyC fully acknowledges that each constituency will, at different times, view in-person participation at an ICANN public meeting as its best method to effectuate policy consistent to its interests and is thus in the best position to determine "when" travel is appropriate. Depending on other related factors, the RyC could support an annual stipend from ICANN's operating budget to each of its constituencies towards encouraging further constituency participation at ICANN public meetings. This is one method of answering "how" ICANN's operating budget could provide for travel support.

Individuals involved in ICANN policy should seek financial support (if and when needed) from within their own constituency. In cases when an individual appeals to his or her own constituency for financial support and the constituency is unable (as opposed to unwilling) to provide such support, an appeal for reimbursement (by the constituency leadership, not the individual beneficiary) to ICANN staff could be made at that point under some condition of "need". Under this approach, the RyC would expect full transparency of requests (and approval) along with an ongoing review by ICANN staff of the

use of the funds in terms of effectiveness of participation in the applicable meeting(s).

In an ideal world, every participant in ICANN in-person meetings would be purely motivated by doing only what is best for the Internet community as a whole, regardless of personal interests. In the real world, participants representing themselves or representing some bigger group of stakeholders are involved to advocate their personal or group interests first and the interests of the broader Internet community second. As long as we have involvement from a broad and representative sample of impacted parties, that should not be viewed negatively, but rather should be accepted and encouraged. At the same time, funding travel expenses for these special interests should be considered cautiously.

In that regard, the RyC is concerned that direct reimbursement from the ICANN operating budget to individuals representing specific policy interests can be seen as ICANN (or more properly registrants who pay fees via their registrars) subsidizing special interest organizations. Many, including GNSO Council representatives, participate in formal ICANN policy venues on behalf of organizations (commercial and noncommercial) that have the potential of directly benefiting from their participation. We wish to caution ICANN – and the broader community – to appreciate that the term "volunteer" is often used quite broadly as part of ICANN's policy formulation process. Business and nonprofit organizations frequently reimburse the travel expense (and other expenses) of the individuals in attendance at an ICANN public meeting. If ICANN's operating budget directly reimburses individuals for travel expense, then the ICANN operating budget may be seen as subsidizing the special interests of these organizations. Moreover, there is the possibility that the independence of individuals could be compromised because they are dependent on ICANN for funding.

The RyC believes that the strength of ICANN is equal to the sum of its parts and it is critical that each of those parts remain as independent as possible. Accountability should be encouraged at the constituency level. We believe there may be methods for the ICANN operating budget to support its constituencies, including as this pertains to physical attendance at ICANN public meetings, as suggested by this communication). Except in cases of special need as discussed herein, the RyC does not see direct reimbursement to individuals from ICANN's operating budget as a sound approach towards maintaining an autonomous, constituency driven ICANN model.

Finally, when evaluating whether or not travel expenses should be provided for GNSO Council members to participate in ICANN in-person meetings, the following questions should be considered:

- Is it more important to fund GNSO Councilor travel expenses than other community participants?
- If the GNSO moves to a working group model where the Council is the manager of policy development and the significant work is done in working groups, should travel for working group members be funded in cases where it is decided to hold in-person working group sessions?
- What are the estimated cost impacts for providing travel expenses for GNSO participants for in-person meetings?
- Assuming ICANN's funds have some limit, if it is decided to provide some funding for travel expenses to in-person meetings, then what budgeted items should be reduced to allow for funding travel?
- How will possible conflicts of interest of individual participants be handled in cases where ICANN subsidizes the costs of those participants?