

Cartagena Statement of the African ICANN community
about the support for African participation
in ICANN policy development processes

The African community through AFRALO and AFRICANN is concerned about its lack of effective participation in the main activities of ICANN as internet users.

The commitment and the participation of the different parts of the community require knowledge of the issues being discussed. In order to improve the quality of the participation, it is important to explain the meaning and the limits of ICANN's mandate, the stakes and the impact sought for.

A major awareness campaign at local and regional levels would be a first step towards a due capacity building program for a meaningful participation

Participation can be done by many and different means. They include email discussion lists, teleconferences, fora, videoconferences, electronic votes, wikis, blogs as well as face-to-face meetings in respective languages

For online participation, it is important to have a calendar that establishes the timing for community input. This calendar would allow more effective planning and optimal engagement of the community.

Even as we celebrate the diverse methods and tools available, we recognize that many challenges remain to be overcome for effective participation of users at the edge. Some are entirely technical and will improve with time.

Others, however, will require means and commitment to improvement in interactions from all stakeholders, users included.

Volunteered work is not very sustainable in Africa due to the necessity to make a living and institutions are unwilling to continue to cover the cost of their staff on volunteer assignments. The challenge is to have many motivated African experts to participate in a regular and effective way.

Therefore, we, AFRALO and AFRICANN members, recommend to call for support from development agencies, private sector and other potential actors to facilitate African participation to ICANN policy development processes.

We acknowledge that the ICANN fellowship program is supporting the participation from developing economies. Henceforth we urge the ICANN Board consider the following:

- The number of fellowships from African Regions should be increased

Recognizing that the present form of capacity building has not produced the desired outcome, a more proactive approach needs to be adopted:

- Policy advocates and students' needs to be identified and recruited in a manner that is sustainable.
- Advocates should be situated and employed on a part-time basis in existing policy institutions or think tanks that are already engaged in local and global internet policy.
- In their capacity as staff, they will be responsible for policy making locally, nationally and regionally and will engage internationally in policy making fora such as the IGF, ICANN, ISOC and other global policy arena.
- This function requires support from development agencies who are concerned about the dearth of African policy makers locally and in the international arena. Support for this sort of initiative must be protracted and sustained over a period of time rather than the current approach of facilitating developing country participation at conferences and international policy for a travel support.
- Policy advocates must act as bridges between their countries/regions and the international policy forum. Their host institutions must act as bridging institutions in the same capacity as the advocates.
- This dual policy vehicle of person and institution will ensure sustained policy development if it is developed and deployed in the different regions in the continent. For institutions such as ICANN, they provide value and leverage where engagement, direct and immediate responses are required for certain policy situations.

- If this model gathers the support of ICANN, it can seek the partnership and support from other institutions such as APC, Kictanet, IISD or AfriNIC to host policy advocates for a period using an internship framework. Policy advocates can also spend certain periods at places like ICANN or the IGF secretariat.