Testimony: Fadi Chehadé, ICANN

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Subcommittee, I am Fadi Chehadé, the President and CEO of ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. I am very pleased to be testifying before you today.

Forty-five years ago, America demonstrated its technological brilliance by inventing the Internet. We showed our diplomatic genius 29 years later, by establishing a multistakeholder community model to govern a part of the Internet's basic functioning, free from the political pressures inherent in government-run institutions. This was a bold and unprecedented experiment. Governance by those who make the Internet work for the benefit of all. Over the past 16 years the multistakeholder community has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to govern itself, and according to the framework laid out across three U.S. Presidential administrations, ICANN has matured into a responsible, representative, respected governing body. America's great experiment has succeeded.

In recent years some have questioned the principle of the multistakeholder community. Some critics demand a greater role for governments, perhaps by

transferring functions performed by ICANN to an inter-governmental

organization, such as the ITU. They point out that the Internet is not truly free

from government control if one government retains unique control for itself –

referring to the United States, via issuance of the contract with ICANN to

perform the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) functions. The U.S.,

its allies, and the vast majority of stakeholders acknowledge this one

exception to the "no government control" rule, but make clear that overseeing

the IANA contract is ministerial, minor and has had no real impact on day-to-

day operations of ICANN or the Internet. And they remind us that for nearly

16 years the U.S. has consistently voiced its support for the multistakeholder

model rather than a government-run model. Additionally, the U.S. has

consistently reduced its unilateral involvement in ICANN matters and

oversight of ICANN operations.

On March 14th, the NTIA announced its intent to transition this final element –

stewardship of Internet domain name functions via the IANA contract – to the

global multistakeholder community. The U.S. called upon ICANN to convene a

process to develop a proposal for that transition that will guarantee no future

government control. ICANN, the Internet technical organizations and many

American organizations – such as AT&T, Cisco, Google, Microsoft, Neustar, the

U.S. Chamber and Verizon – almost immediately voiced their support for NTIA's announcement.

As outlined in the NTIA's announcement, the NTIA's stewardship role will not be replaced with a government-led or an intergovernmental solution. This is consistent with the unequivocal policy expressed in the 2012 bipartisan resolutions of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives (S.Con.Res.50 and H.Con.Res.127) affirming U.S. support for the multistakeholder model of Internet governance.

In brief, the proposal generated through broad multistakeholder dialogue will meet the following four fundamental criteria:

- Supports and enhances the multistakeholder model
- Maintains the security, stability and resiliency of the DNS
- Meets the expectations of affected parties
- Maintains the openness of the Internet

ICANN is committed to developing a robust bottom-up process to develop the proposal for transition. At ICANN's forty ninth public meeting, which took place last week in Singapore, ICANN launched discussions with the

multistakeholder community, in-person and remotely, for public dialogue on how the mechanisms for the transition should occur. Inputs are being compiled and on April 7 will be put out for public comment and community feedback. The feedback from the community will inform the process going forward. ICANN is facilitating the process, and in this regard will work with its partners to engage the global multistakeholder community in relevant forums and meetings around the world, in addition to ICANN's public meetings.

In its role as administrator of the IANA functions since 1998, ICANN has been responsible for coordinating unique Internet identifiers – names, IP numbers, and protocol parameters – and has done so while maintaining the continued security, stability, and resiliency of the Internet. It is important to note that ICANN doesn't control content on the Internet; instead it coordinates the Internet's unique identifier functions. These functions are not apparent to most Internet users, but they play a critical role in maintaining a single, global, unified and interoperable Internet. ICANN has performed the IANA functions for nearly 16 years, in a no-fee agreement with the U.S. government.

Since its inception in 1998, ICANN has evolved its accountability and transparency mechanisms for the benefit of the global community. ICANN's

Bylaws, and the Affirmation of Commitments, establish clear mechanisms for

ICANN's evolution, review of its processes, and improvements, through

community input and multistakeholder review committees. With the eventual

transition, ICANN recognizes the urgency of enhancing and extending its

accountability mechanisms. At the meeting in Singapore, the ICANN

multistakeholder community began a dialogue on this subject, taking the

Affirmation of Commitments as a baseline.

In relation to the IANA functions, ICANN's Performance Standards for

timeliness and accuracy of processing stakeholder's requests are published on

a monthly basis. In addition, ICANN is subject to an annual audit of the

security of the IANA functions systems. Over the years, ICANN has performed

the IANA functions with increasing autonomy, demonstrating in the process

both operational excellence and maturity in organization – as illustrated by

the findings of the IANA Functions Satisfaction Survey of December 2013. In

addition, after an independent assessment, the IANA Functions Department

received recognition from an international organization for its business

excellence.

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Now, let me be clear: this announcement will not affect the status quo. The continued strength and stability of the IANA functions are critical to the operation of the Internet. The IANA functions will continue to be administered by ICANN in coordination and cooperation with the affected parties (country code and generic top-level domain operators, root server system operators, regional Internet registries, the Internet Architecture Board and the Internet Engineering Task Force). These bodies continue to hold policy authority for names, IP numbers and protocol parameters. They also maintain oversight responsibility to ensure that ICANN administers these functions according to those policies. Finally, this announcement does not affect Internet users and their use of the Internet. While stakeholders work through the ICANN-convened process to develop a transition proposal, NTIA's current role will remain unchanged.

Since ICANN's beginning, the U.S. government has envisaged transitioning its modest stewardship role to the private-sector led, multistakeholder community. Today, ICANN is uniquely positioned, as both the current IANA functions contractor and the global coordinator for the DNS, to convene the multistakeholder process to develop the transition plan. NTIA's announcement in fact represents the final triumph of the American ideal for

self-governance by the Internet community, free from government control, even our own. Few nations in history have had such vision, magnanimity and consistency. ICANN understands and accepts the responsibility of the task at hand, and I am confident in ICANN's ability to lead the community in this effort.

Both ICANN and the U.S. government have championed the multistakeholder model, in which standards and policies are developed by large and small businesses, the technical community, not-for-profit organizations, civil society, intellectual property experts, governments, academia, and Internet users from around the globe. American corporations – such as AT&T, Cisco, Google, Microsoft, Neustar and Verizon – and the Internet technical community (the IAB, IETF, the Internet Society, the RIRs and the World Wide Web Consortium) are also supporters of the multistakeholder model. These entities have welcomed the U.S. government's announcement as the way to bring more countries to support the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance, moving them away from a model in which only governments hold sway. NTIA's announcement preserves and prolongs the free and open Internet that has brought so much economic growth and social and cultural development.

Thank you for inviting me to testify. I would be happy to answer any

questions you may have.

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- On March 14th, the NTIA announced its intent to transition this final element – stewardship of Internet domain name functions via the IANA contract – to the global multistakeholder community.

- As outlined in the NTIA's announcement, the NTIA's stewardship role will not be replaced with a government-led or an intergovernmental solution.

- Over the past 16 years the multistakeholder community has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to govern itself, and according to the framework laid out across three U.S. Presidential administrations, ICANN has matured into a responsible, representative, respected governing body.

- ICANN has performed the IANA functions for nearly 16 years, in a no-fee agreement with the U.S. government.

- Overseeing the IANA contract is ministerial, minor and has had no real impact on day-to-day operations of ICANN or the Internet.

- ICANN is facilitating the process, and in this regard will work with its partners to engage the global multistakeholder community in relevant forums and meetings around the world, in addition to ICANN's public meetings.

- While stakeholders work through the ICANN-convened process to develop a transition proposal, NTIA's current role will remain unchanged.