Annex to 2010-04-22-08 Latin American Meeting Location

ANNEX TO BOARD SUBMISSION NO. 2010-04-22-08
Location of December 2010 ICANN Meeting

DETAILED ANALYSIS:

1. Background:

In January 2009, ICANN called for expressions of interest to assist as host of the 2010 Latin America ICANN Meeting. Viable proposals were received from:

- .CO Internet S.A.S. - Cartagena, Columbia

- Government of the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Site visits to Buenos Aires, Argentina and Cartagena, Columbia were conducted in November of 2009. Both locations were found to be capable of hosting an ICANN Meeting.

At the 12 March ICANN Board meeting in Nairobi, the Board resolved, "the CEO is authorized to negotiate with those that submitted proposals to host the ICANN 2010 Latin America International Meeting, and make a recommendation to the Board for approval at an upcoming ICANN Board meeting.

Redacted

Cartagena

Staff recommends that the Meeting be held in Cartagena. The proposal from Cartagena has wide institutional support. It comes from the private sector (ccTLD), and has the support of the national government (Minister of Information and Communications Technologies), as well as the local government (Mayor of the City of Cartagena). Cartagena also has the support of most of ICANN's Latin American stakeholders. The host organization, .CO Internet S.A.S., is capable of supporting the Meeting, and is anxious to host. While the use of a convention center has proven to be less desirable than a large hotel, Cartagena offers a good combination of accessibility, meeting facilities and hotel accommodations for the December 2010 ICANN Meeting. All meetings will take place at the Julio Cesar Ayala Cartagena de Indias Convention Center. Nearby hotels will be used for Board and staff accommodations. Other hotels around the city will

provide the remaining delegate accommodations required. All hotels are within a 15-minute bus ride to the convention center.
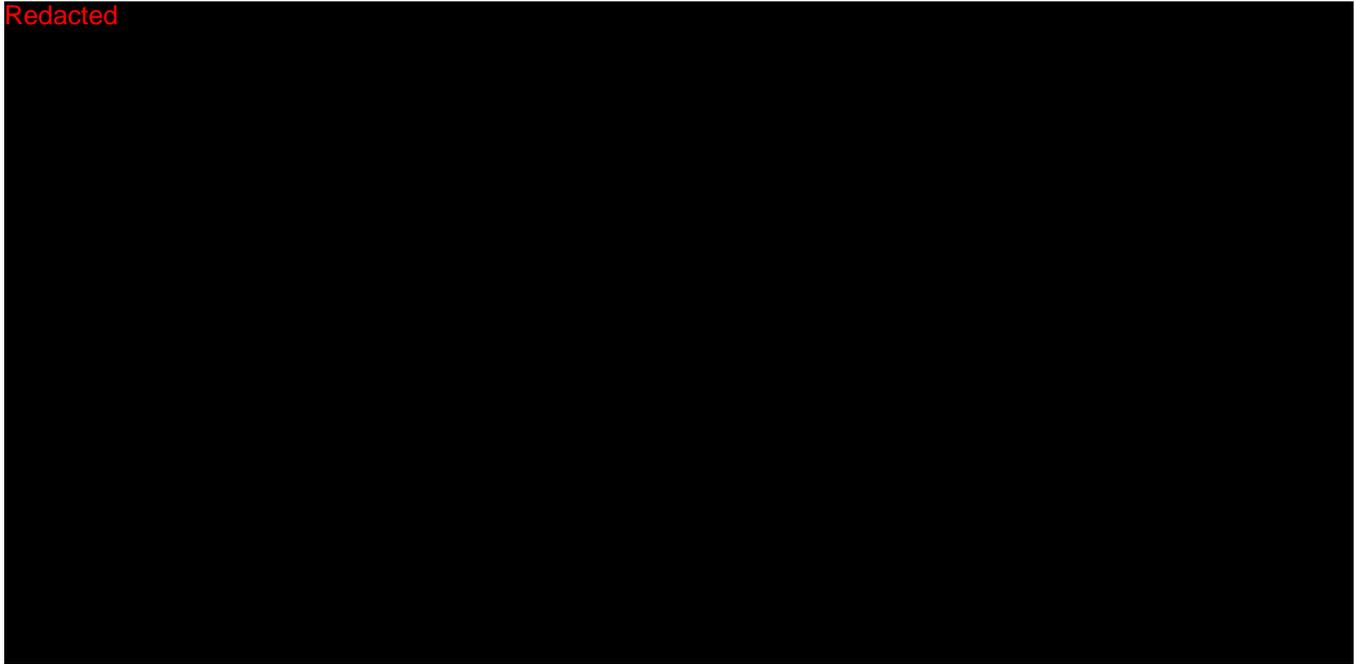
The Board Finance Committee and the Board of Directors have approved a budget of US$2.126 M for the ICANN Meeting in Cartagena.

Key stakeholders and their positions are:

3. Consultation—internal and/or external:
Internal: Global Partnerships
External: The potential host for Cartagena.
External: ICANN community members.

4. Potential Objections and Proposed Responses:
**Objections:** No objections to Cartagena, Columbia have been raised.

5. Resource implications:
The Board Finance Committee and the Board of Directors have approved a budget of US$2.126M for this meeting. By comparison, the Sydney budget was US$1.973M, the Seoul budget was US$1.993M, and the budget for Nairobi was US$2.235M.

# Annex to 2010-04-22-08 Latin American Meeting Location Argentina and Colombia for ICANN
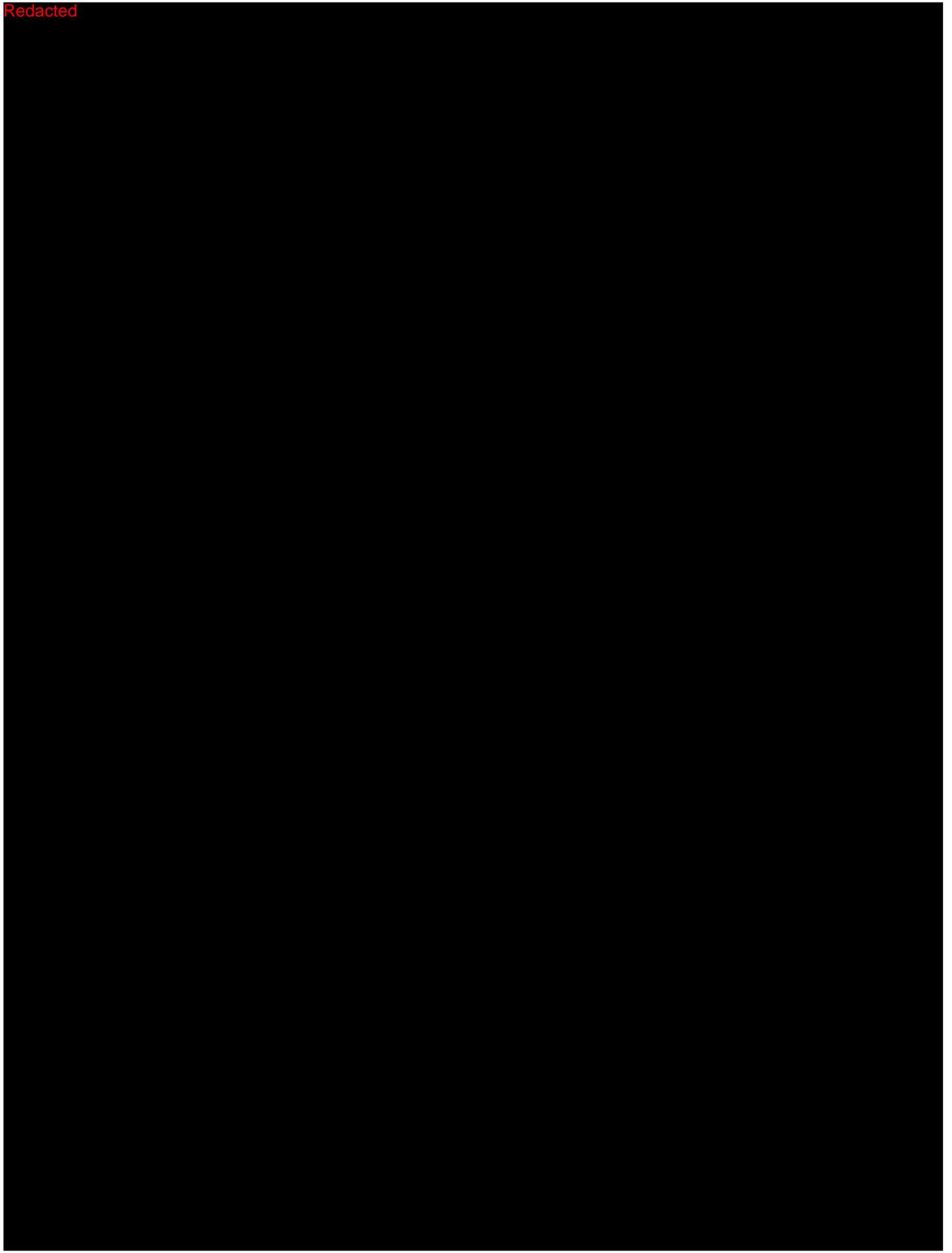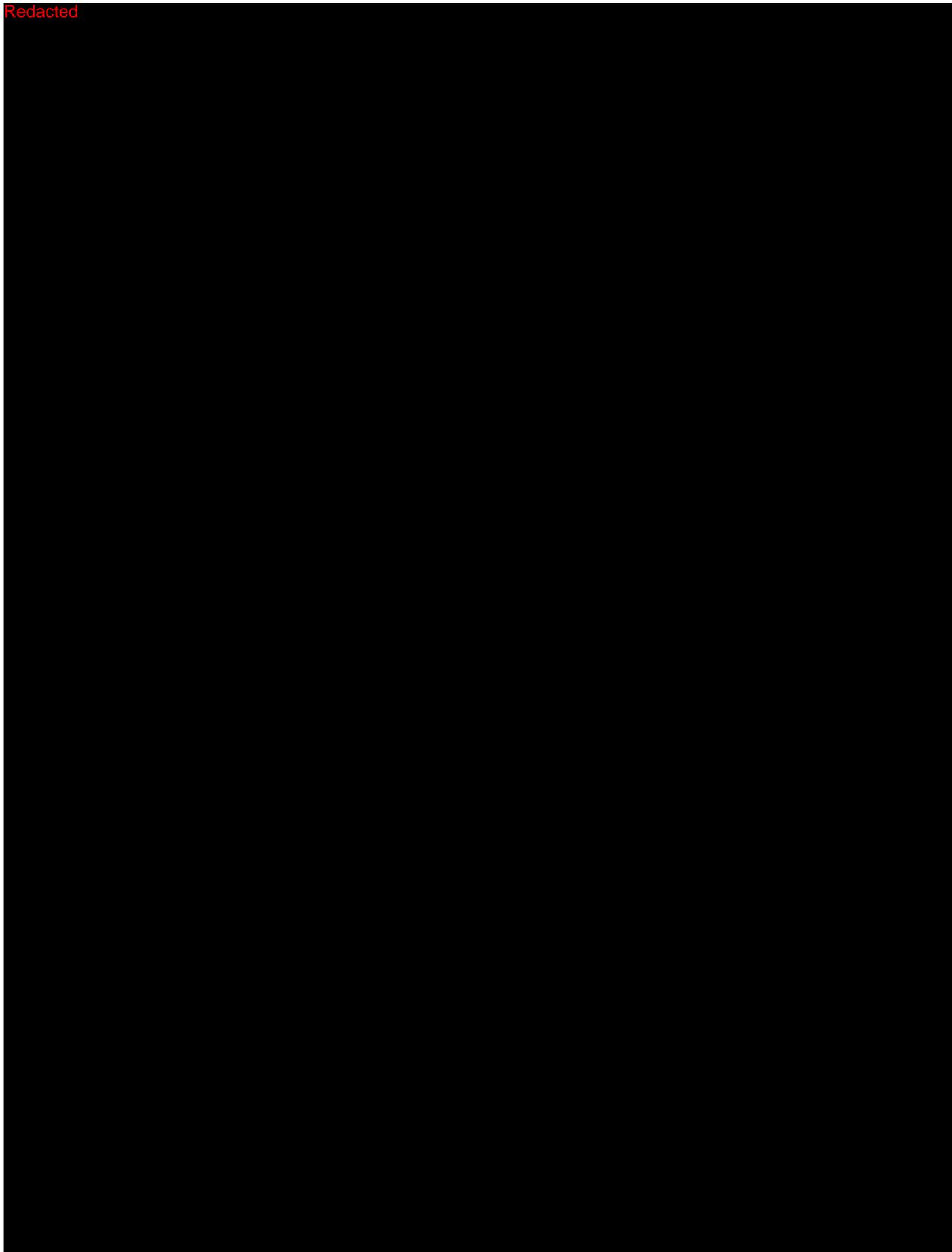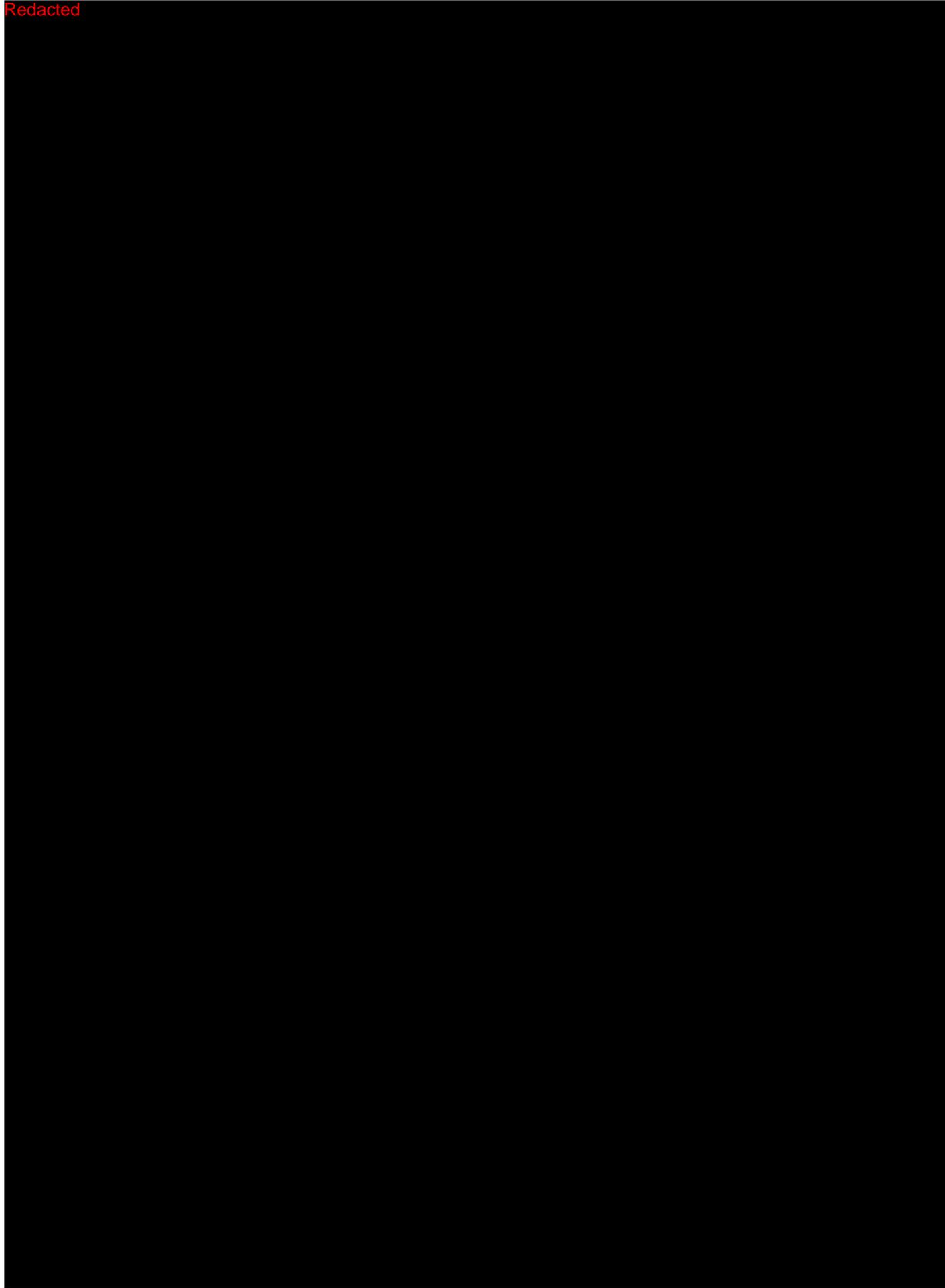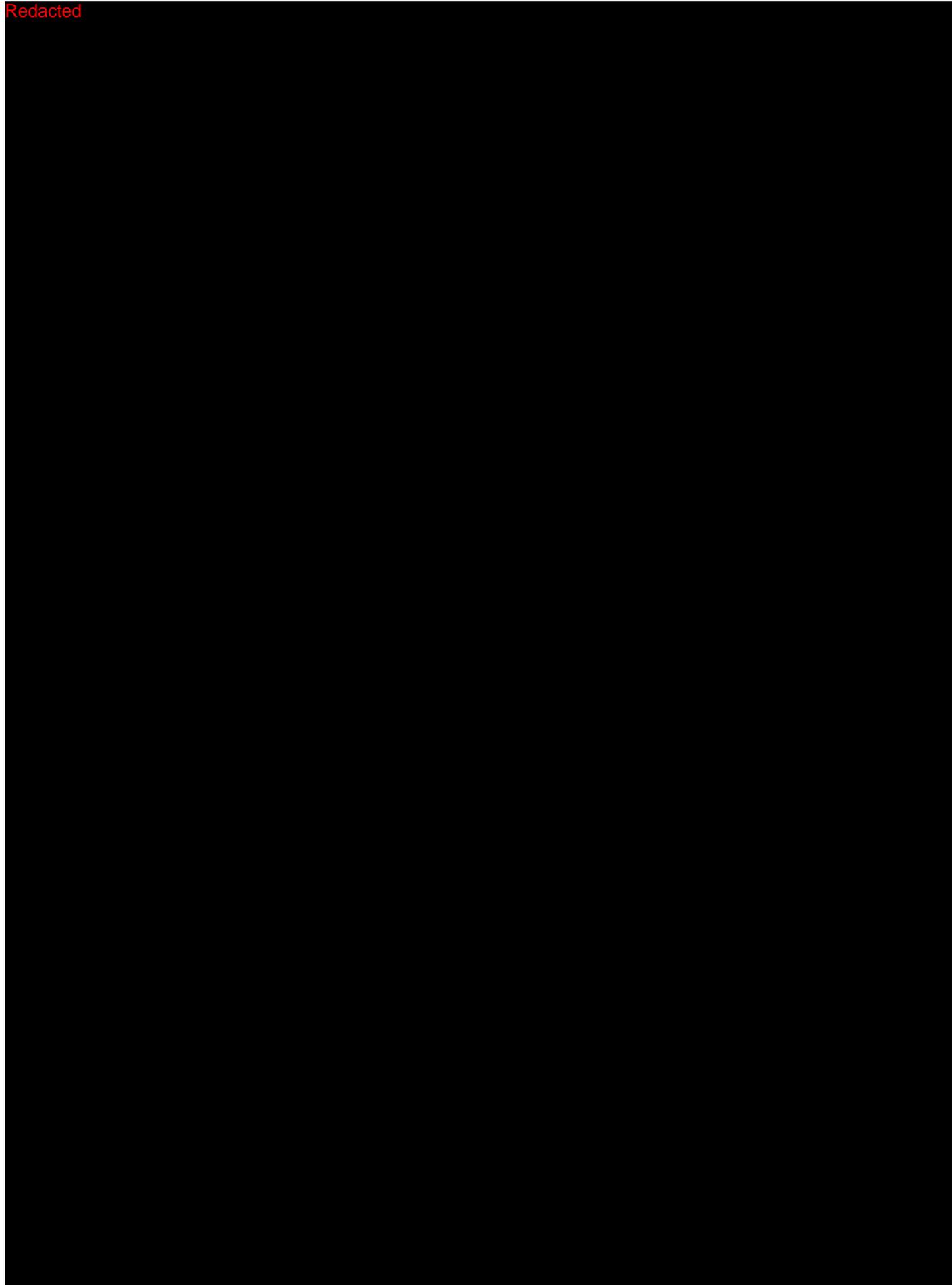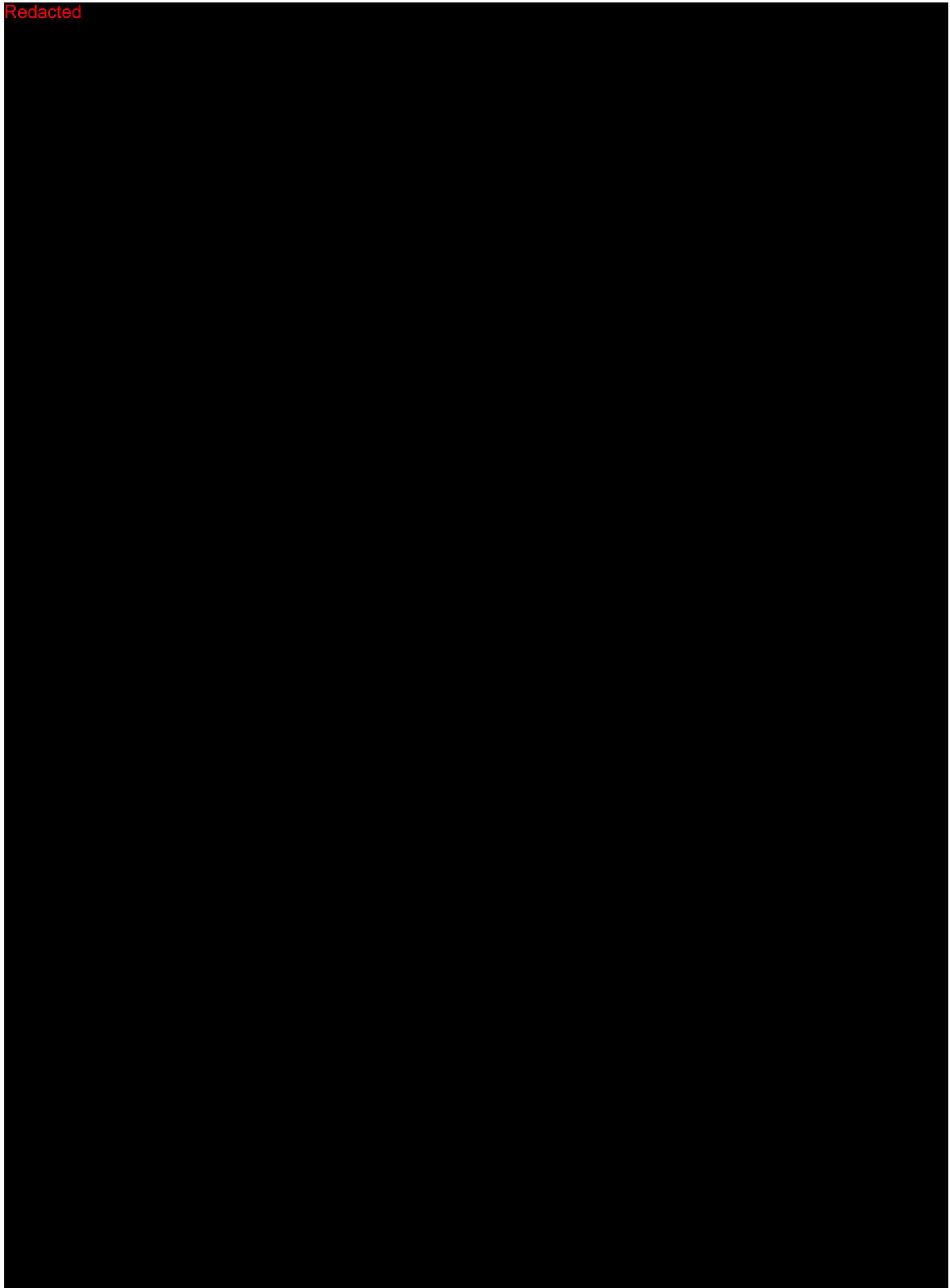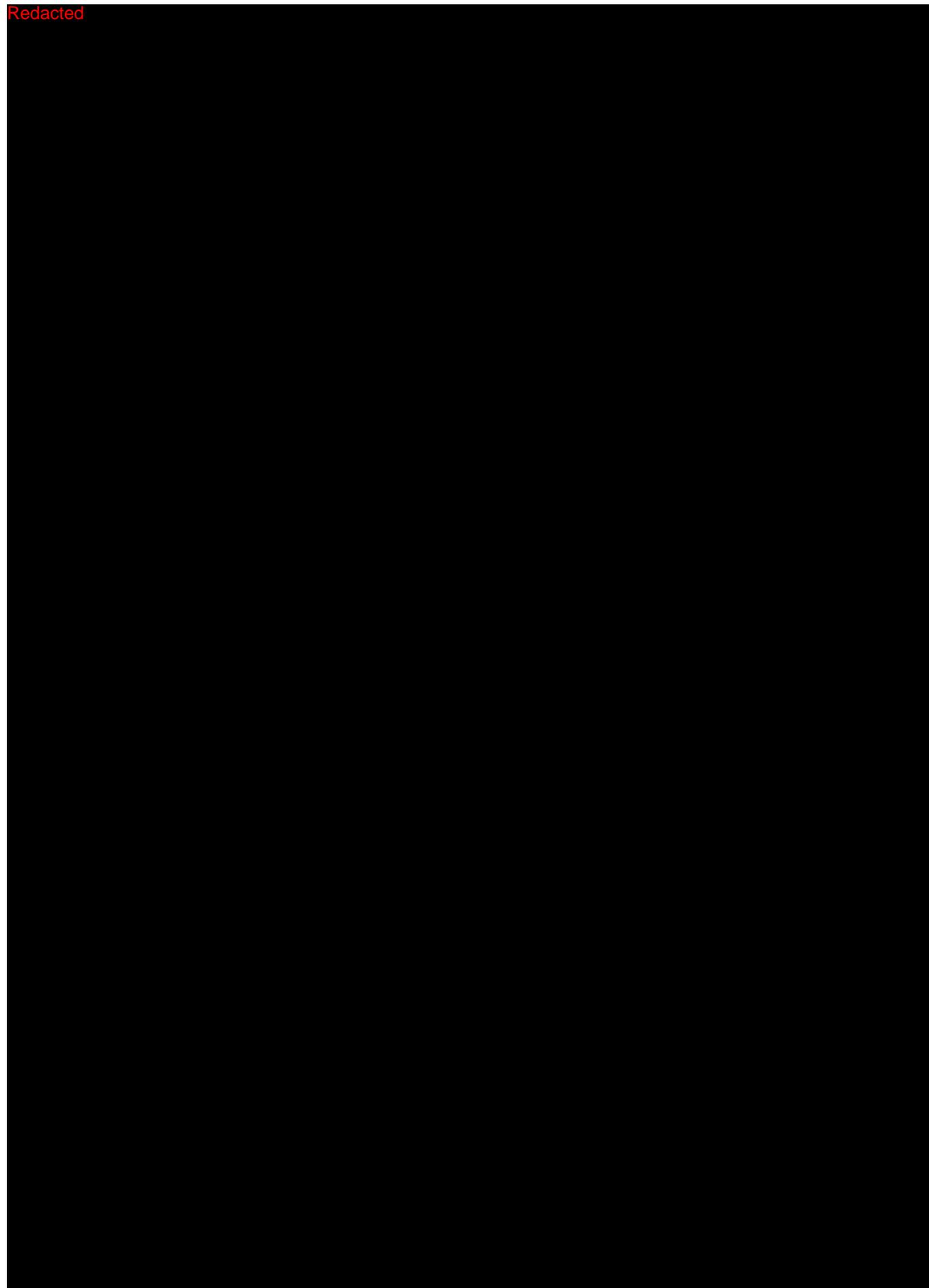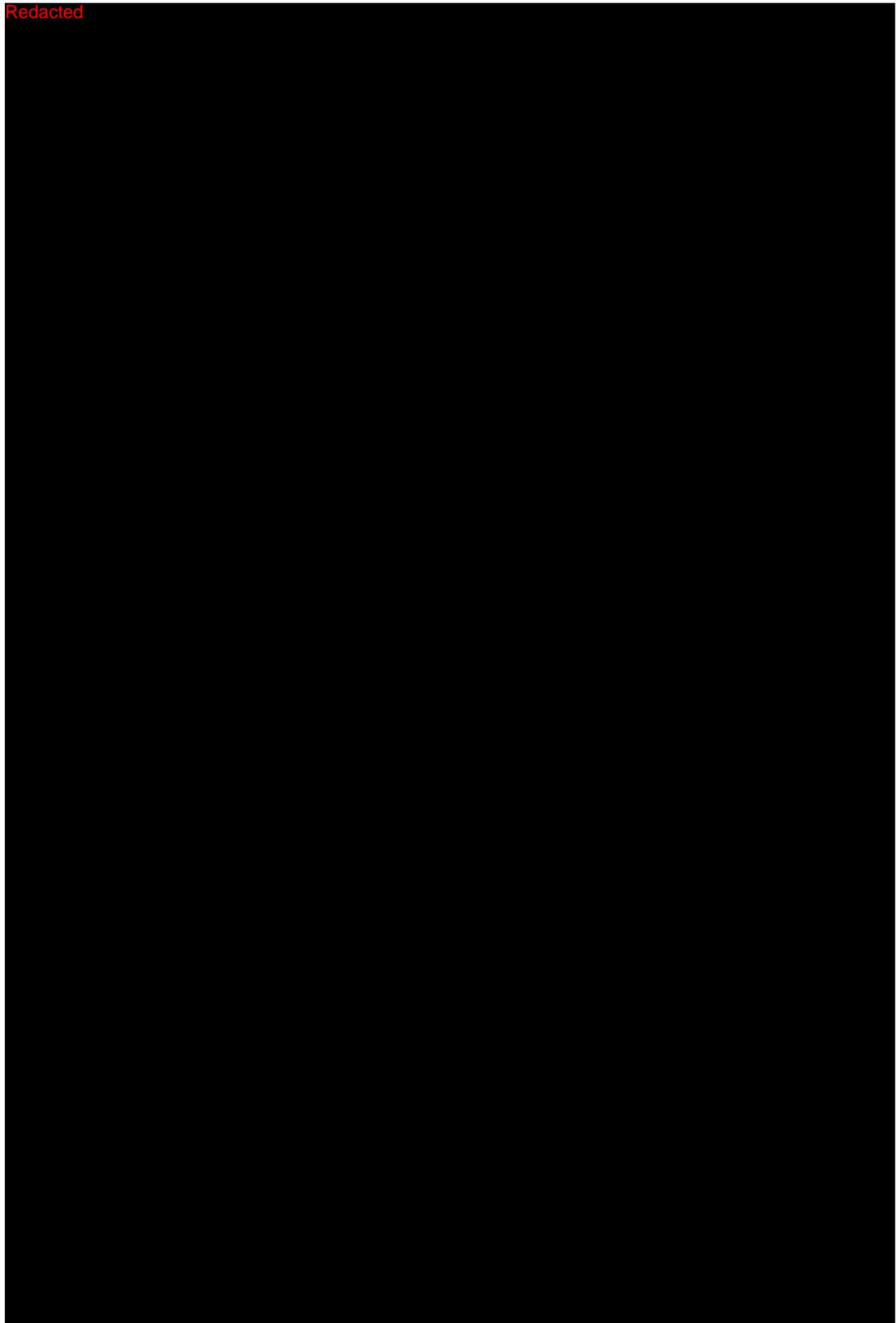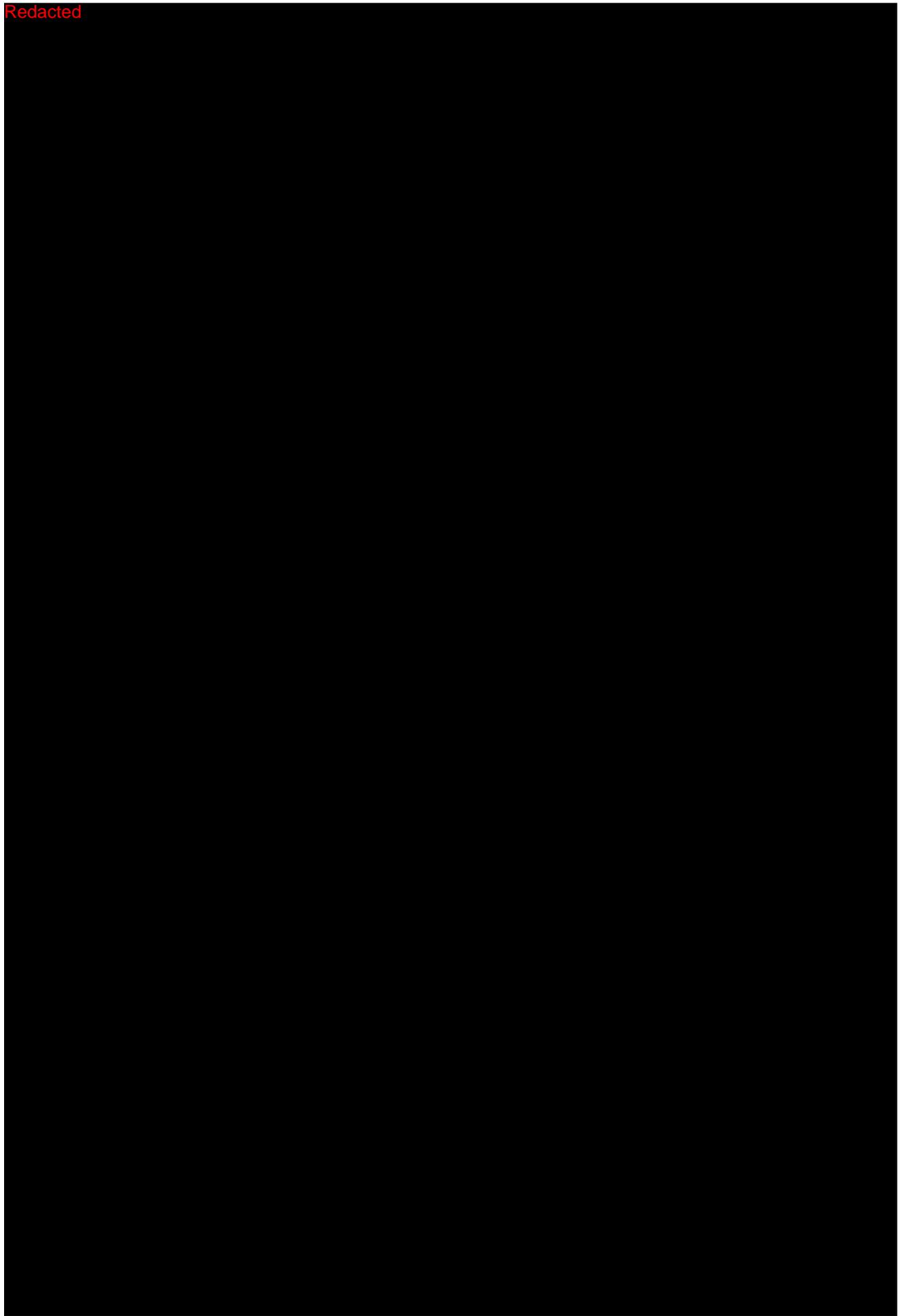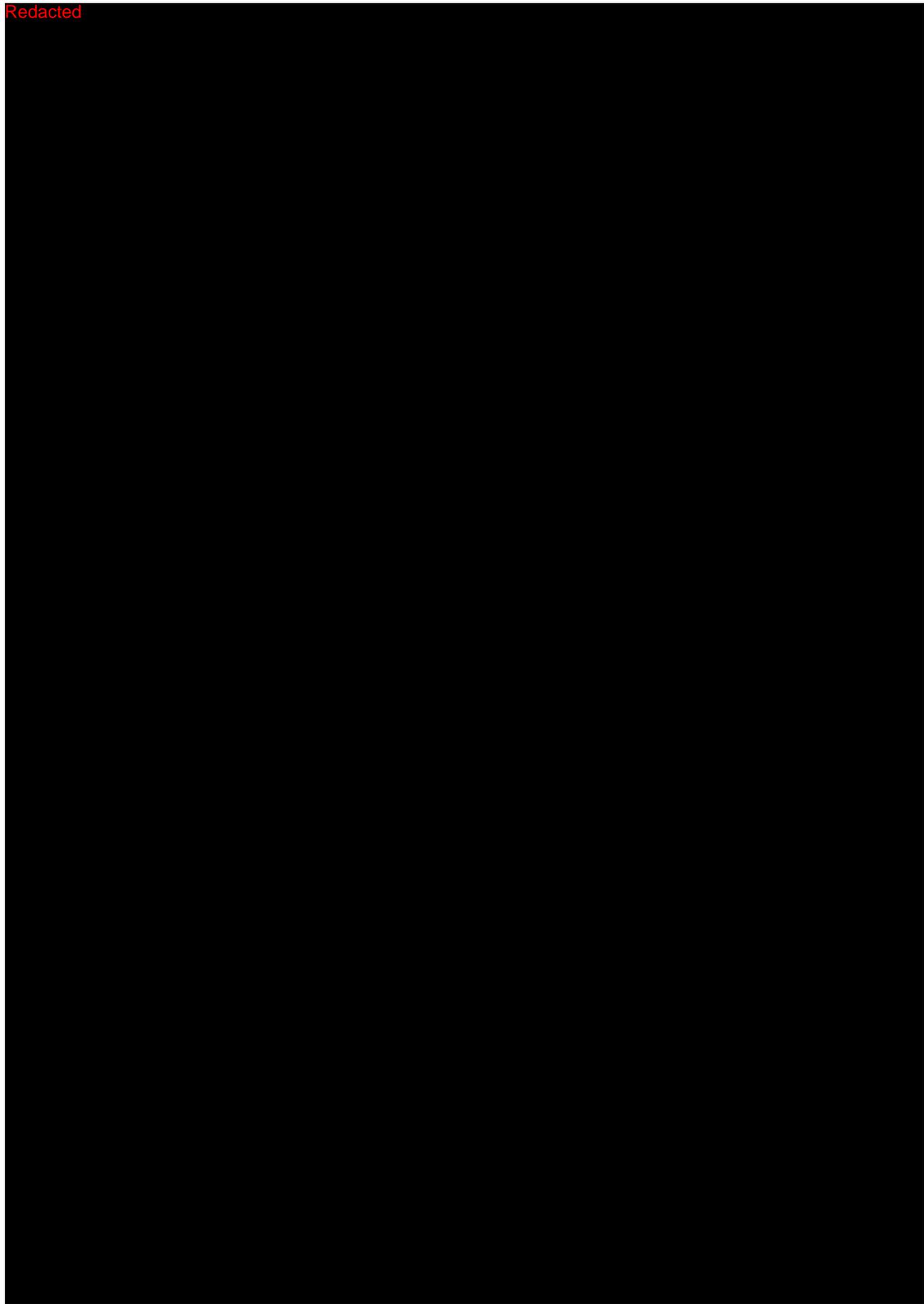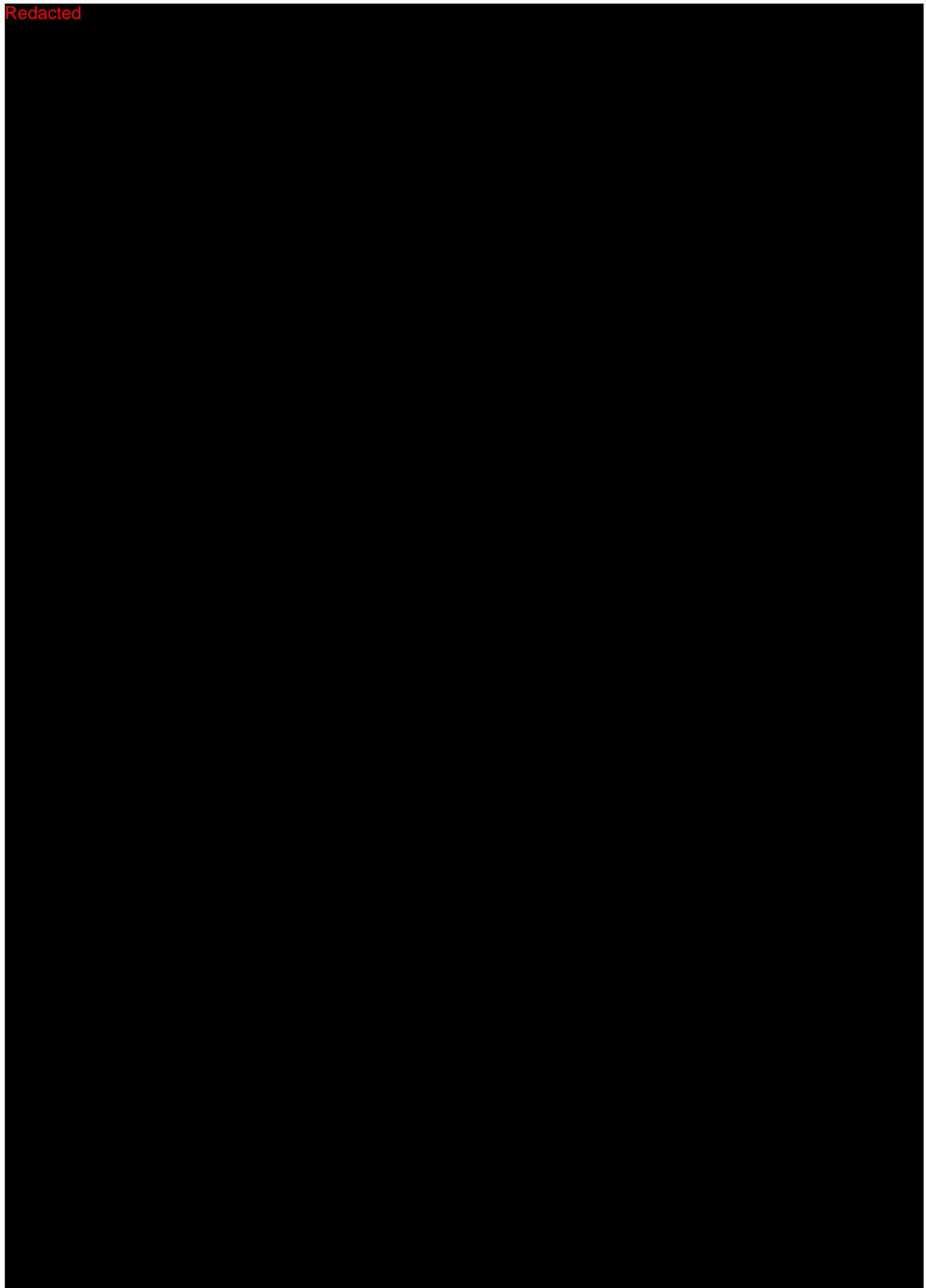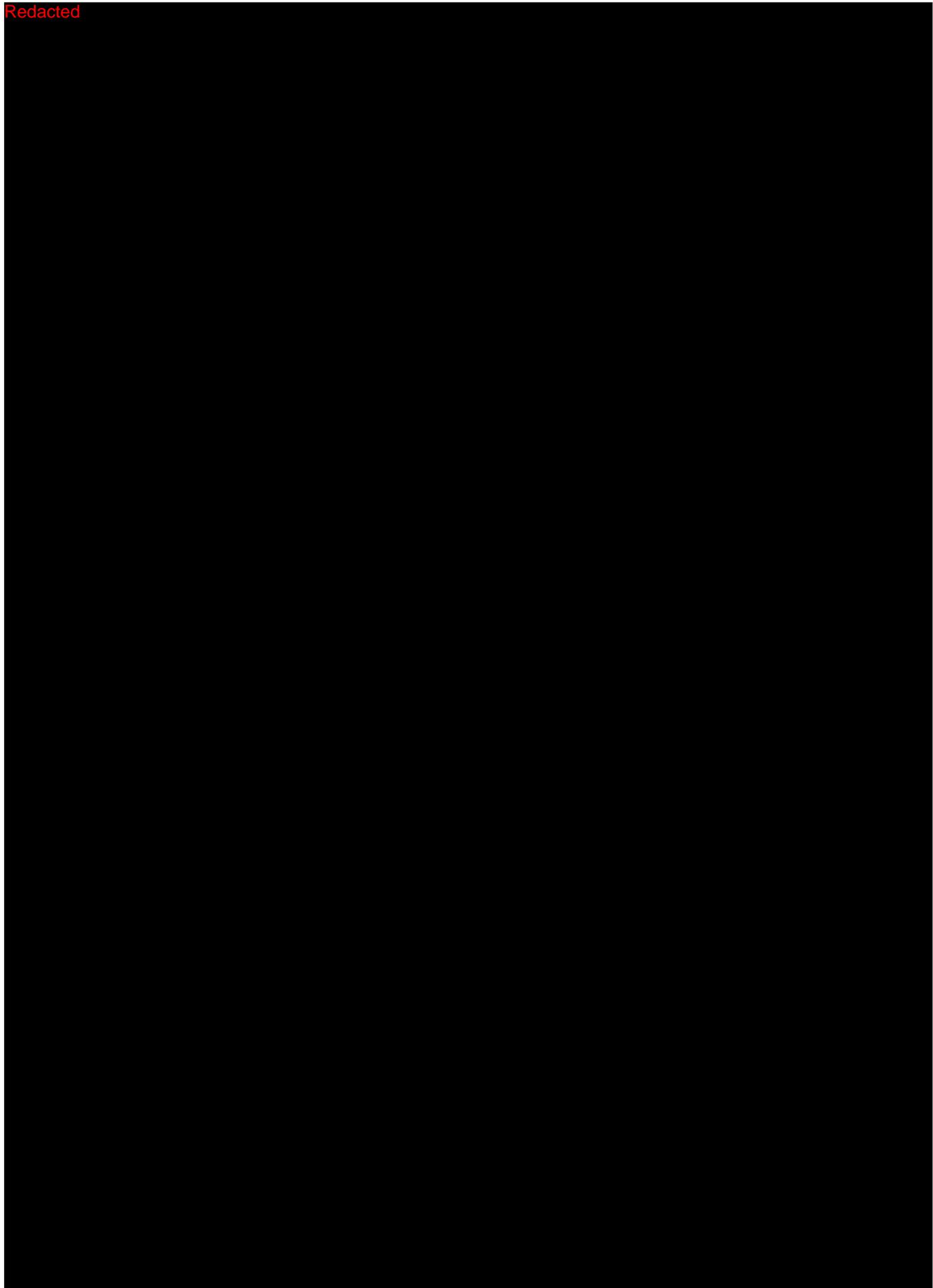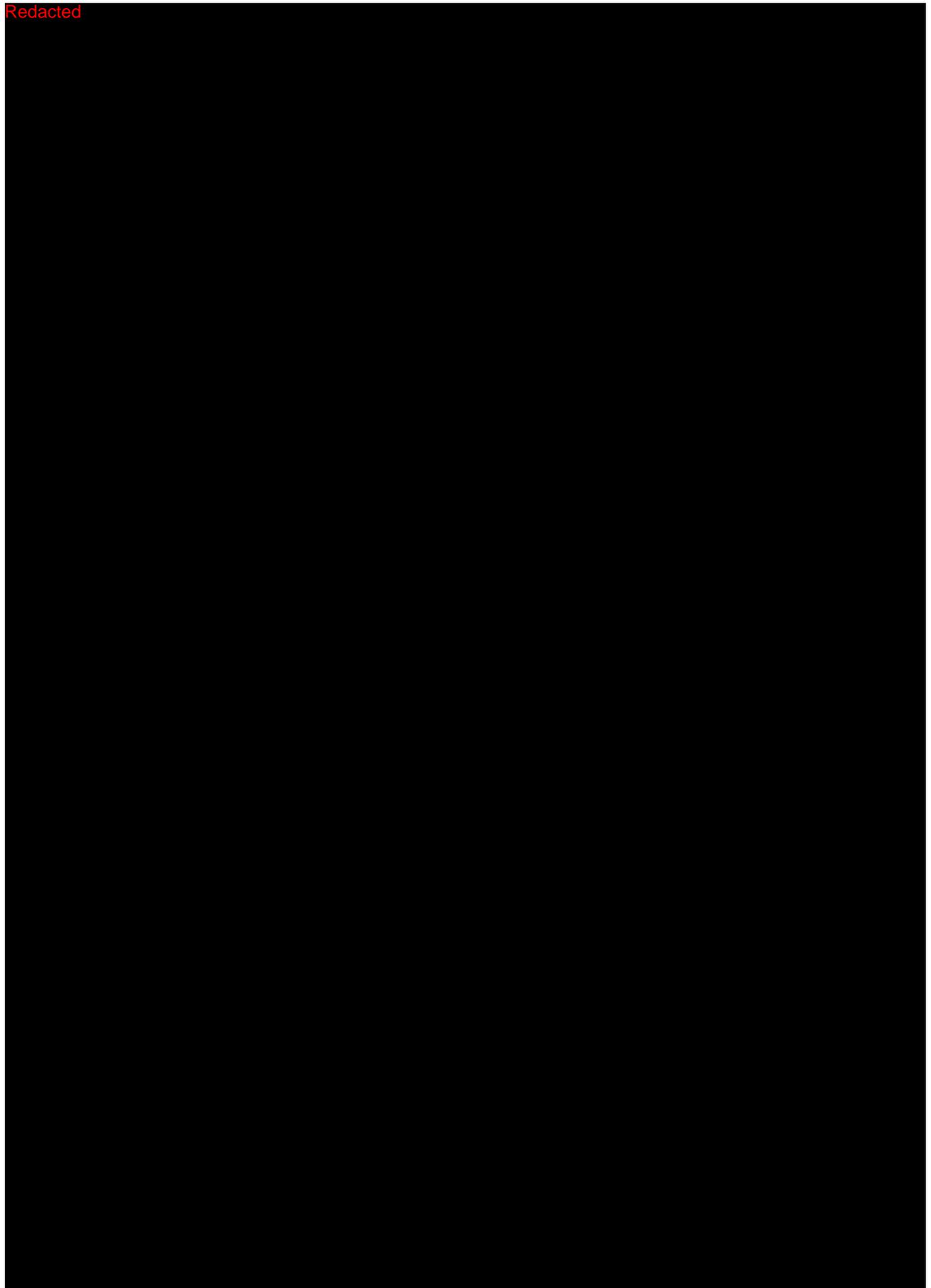
Annex to 2010-04-22-11 New gTLDs Project Plan

ANNEX

ICANN BOARD SUBMISSION NO. 2010-04-22-11

TITLE: **New gTLD Program – Project Plan Update**
PROPOSED ACTION: **For Information**

The various components of project work in the current period are discussed in the following sections. Each section contains the current status and a description of the path to closure of the work in that area.

   1. Publishing draft version 4 of the Applicant Guidebook

Version 4 of the draft Applicant Guidebook is targeted for publication by June, to inform discussion at the Brussels meeting. This will include the maturation of several areas of the guidebook that have been iterated through the previous drafts, and clarifications and amplifications that have been committed to in response to public comment. Version 4 will also include completed work on:

    A. Trademark protection

Status: The public comment period has been completed for the latest versions of the trademark-related proposals under consideration, incorporating the work of the GNSO's STI group. The Clearinghouse model has been updated in accordance with Board comment in Nairobi. Analysis of the body of comment indicates that consensus has been reached in a number of areas pertaining to the Trademark Clearinghouse and URS proposals, while a limited number of areas remain subjects of discussion. This most recent set of comments also contains a number of useful suggestions for enhancing the organization and clarity of the proposals, which are being taken on board.

Pending completion of the assessment and consideration of the public comments, final versions of the Trademark Clearinghouse and Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS) mechanisms are being created for inclusion in draft v4 of the Applicant Guidebook. Additionally, there is an open consultation with registries and others scheduled for 13 April to work out remaining issues on the Trademark Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure (PDDRP), so that a final version can be included in draft v4 of the guidebook.

More detail is available under separate cover, in the paper relating to the Trademark Issues Update agenda item.

Closure: Public discussion and comment on the final versions of these three proposals will take place during and after the Brussels meeting. Analysis of this comment will drive a decision, likely in the July-September timeframe, on whether the Trademark Protection set of

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issues has been sufficiently addressed. If so, then this work will be considered closed. If not, then next steps, such as additional revision or consultation on the proposals, will need to take place.

B. Registry agreement

Status: The two issues remaining to be resolved for a final version of the Registry Agreement are 1) the process for future amendments, and 2) vertical integration. Both are critical to completing a new draft of the registry agreement to be included in draft version 4 of the guidebook.

An explanatory memorandum published prior to the Nairobi meeting described a range of options available to address the need for future amendments of the registry agreement, resulting in some comment. This area is also being discussed with registries and the wider community at an open consultation on 13 April.

Regarding vertical integration, work internally is focusing on implementation of the model contained in the Board's resolution in Nairobi.[1] Concurrently, a large working group is moving forward on the GNSO policy development process on vertical integration. A public comment period is currently open on the group's work.[2]

More detail is available under separate cover, in the paper relating to the Vertical Integration agenda item.

Closure: ICANN continues to work closely with the gTLD Registries stakeholder group during this trimester in response to their concerns about the amendment process models proposed to date. This engagement is undertaken with the goal of a final framework on the process for future amendments that is broadly accepted and published in draft version 4 of the guidebook.

With regard to vertical integration, parallel paths are being pursued. A position based on the Board resolution will be included in draft version 4 of the guidebook. The GNSO's policy development process is taking place concurrently and is likely to continue beyond the publication of version 4. Thus, a decision will be required on whether this issue will be considered closed (i.e., the program will move forward with an approach based on the Board's model) until such time as the GNSO's policy work has produced a recommendation, or whether the policy outcome will be considered a pre-requisite for closure of the issue.

C. IDN

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[1] http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#5
[2] http://icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-3-29mar10-en.htm

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Status: This is essentially complete. Guidebook excerpts containing proposed positions on the final IDN 3-character requirement and the interim IDN variant approach for gTLDs were published for comment prior to the Nairobi meeting. Based on comment and discussions within the community, the 3-character issue is resolved, while the IDN variant approach still has some remaining details to be worked out.

Closure: Flesh out the current interim proposal on IDN variants. Finishing the work requires completion of the studies of DNAME and other mechanisms that are being commenced. Finishing DNAME work is not a prerequisite to launching the gTLD process.

    D. <u>Malicious Conduct</u>

*Status***:** The working group on Zone File Access created a list of possible models for a centralized zone file access system, and is currently reviewing public comment to refine the list. A recommended model will be incorporated into draft version 4 of the Applicant Guidebook for comment.

The remaining deliverables on malicious conduct incorporate the work of two groups within the community. The High Security Zone TLD (HSTLD) working group published an update on its activities in February, and also held a workshop in Nairobi. The group is expected to complete a proposed control framework for the elective HSTLD program to be included in draft version 4 of the guidebook for comment.

Closure: The Zone File Access model will be complete for version 4 of the guidebook.

The HSTLD working group's control framework will be included in draft version 4 of the guidebook for comment. The work on the HSTLD program, however, is likely to continue beyond version 4 until there is an HSTLD program that is operationally complete and broadly supported. It is thought by the group that he New gTLD Program can begin to accept applications without the HSTLD requirements in place.

2. Completing the contracted economic studies

Status: Additional economic analysis is being undertaken. ICANN has contracted to retain the services of Greg Rosston of Stanford University and Michael Katz of University of California Berkeley, both recommended by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The first phase of the contract tasked the economic experts retained with surveying published studies and resources that describe the potential impacts of new gTLD introduction, examining theoretical arguments about benefits and costs of increased gTLDs, and considering and proposing empirical studies to identify areas where additional work can serve to assess costs and benefits. A draft of these results is expected this month.

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Closure: The second phase will: estimate cost of defensive registrations, develop metrics to assess overall expected benefits / costs, and develop a process to assess whether net economic consumer harm might result from individual applications. This last process will enable objections that individual TLDs will result in detriment.

If there is additional policy consideration (i.e., review by the GNSO) needed on this objection based model, this will take place post-Brussels. Completion of the work will then entail implementation: incorporating the agreed-on mechanisms into the new gTLD procedures.

3. Completing the root-scaling study

Status: RSSAC and RSSAC work on this issues continues. A study estimating projected delegation rates was furnished to inform the work of these advisory committees. The work indicated anticipated delegation rates of 200-300 TLDs/year and, even if there were a huge number (tens of thousands) of applications, the delegation rate would not exceed 924 TLDs/year.

Closure: Requires findings by the advisory committee studies.

4. Completing preparations for operational readiness

In parallel with the resolution of remaining implementation issues, ICANN continues to move forward on putting operational resources in place to ensure successful application and evaluation processes.

A. Panel Procurement

Status:
ICANN continues to work on the basis of the agreements in principle with selected dispute resolution service providers that are in place for each of the four objection grounds:

Objection ground	Provider
String confusion	International Centre for Dispute Resolution
Legal rights	The Arbitration and Mediation Center of the World Intellectual Property Organization
Morality / public order	The International Center for Expertise of the International Chamber of Commerce
Community	The International Center for Expertise of the International Chamber of Commerce

Oral presentations and tentative selectionshave been completed with candidates for five evaluation panels:

- Financial Evaluation Panel
- Technical and Operational Evaluation Panel

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- String Similarity Panel
- Geographic Names Panel
- Community Priority Panel

An assessment of preferred candidates and back-up candidates for each of the five panels has been completed, and negotiations are underway so that the selected providers can be publicized and formally engaged when appropriate.

Closure:

As discussed in the introductory paragraphs of this paper, a decision will be made after the Brussels meeting and after public comment on draft version 4 of the guidebook has been assessed, on how to proceed. Securing of selected providers is dependent on publication of a final Applicant Guidebook and a decision about timelines under which ICANN may formally engage the services of these providers.

In addition, selection processes will need to take place for:

- An Independent Objector
- Trademark Clearinghouse provider(s)
- URS provider(s)
- Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure provider(s)

RFPs for these remaining providers have been drafted or are under development. Closure is not required until the TLD process is launched.

    B.   Application Interface (TAS)

Status:

All preliminary work defining functional requirements and use cases for the registration, finance, legal, and slot request components for the TLD Application System (TAS) has been completed. Coding is underway and quality assurance testing has begun for those phases where coding is complete.

Closure:

Coding and QA testing will continue on the remaining phases. Functional requirements for application submission and evaluation components will begin in the coming months. According to the project schedule, TAS should be operationally ready by calendar Q1 of 2011.

    C.   Business Processes

Status:

Business processes for administrative review and for all Initial Evaluation activities are complete. Customer service processes, such as ticketing systems and FAQ management, are in development.

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Closure:

Process development and training will continue on the remaining phases until all are complete. Staff work on process design is scheduled to be completed in this calendar year. However, production of final detailed processes is somewhat dependent on the actual engagement of third-party panelist providers, as they will need to be involved in creating the details of many lower-level processes.

    D. Facilities

Status:

It is expected that once the New gTLD Program becomes operational, there will be a separate facility to house this function. Investigation of appropriate space in the Marina del Rey area has been completed. An updated review of space available and follow-up steps for securing facilities and making the transition will occur pending developments in the program this year.

Closure:

Securing the necessary facilities is dependent on a decision that will provide adequate certainty on timelines to incur this cost.

5.   Executing on the communications strategy

Status:

With the elimination of the EOI, the communications strategy is now focused on planning and preparing for the opening of the application process, and providing access to the most current knowledge to audiences across the globe. ICANN is also following up on the Board's suggestion to maximize resources by leveraging community (SO and AC) networks to assist in outreach.[3]

More detail is available under separate cover, in the paper relating to the Communications Update agenda item.

Closure:

As noted in the Board's resolution in Nairobi, the communications campaign will be formally launched when the overarching issues are resolved to the satisfaction of the Board.

6.   Developing an approach to providing support resources for new gTLD applicants

Status:

The Board resolved in Nairobi that the community should work collectively to develop a sustainable approach to providing support to applicants requiring assistance in applying for and operating new gTLDs.[4] The GNSO and ALAC have taken the initiative to form a joint group

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[3] See http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#11
[4] See http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-12mar10-en.htm#20

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(open to participation by all SOs and ACs) to complete this effort, and staff support has been appointed to help facilitate the group's work.

Closure:

This is dependent on the work of the community, but it is expected that the group will produce an approach within this calendar year.

6. Publishing the New gTLD Program Budget

Status:

As has been noted beginning with the Operational Plan & Budget for FY09, ICANN will create a stand alone budget for the New gTLD Program to be developed and published for comment. As the program work drives toward a decision (likely within this fiscal year) that will create certainty on timelines and require the realization of projected costs, the program budget increases in importance.

*Closure***:**

The team has a New gTLD Program Budget under development, covering completion of the implementation work and transition to a functioning program, the period in which outlays of funds for activities such as securing facilities or engaging independent panels must be made. It is organized according to a) development costs, b) pre-launch (costs of scaling), and c) operating costs.

The New gTLD Program budget will be posted for discussion at the Brussels meeting. There may need to be some iterations or modifications to the published budget based on public comment.

Submitted by: Karen Lentz, Kurt Pritz

Position:

Date Noted: 12 April 2010

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Annex to 2010-04-22-12 New gTLDs
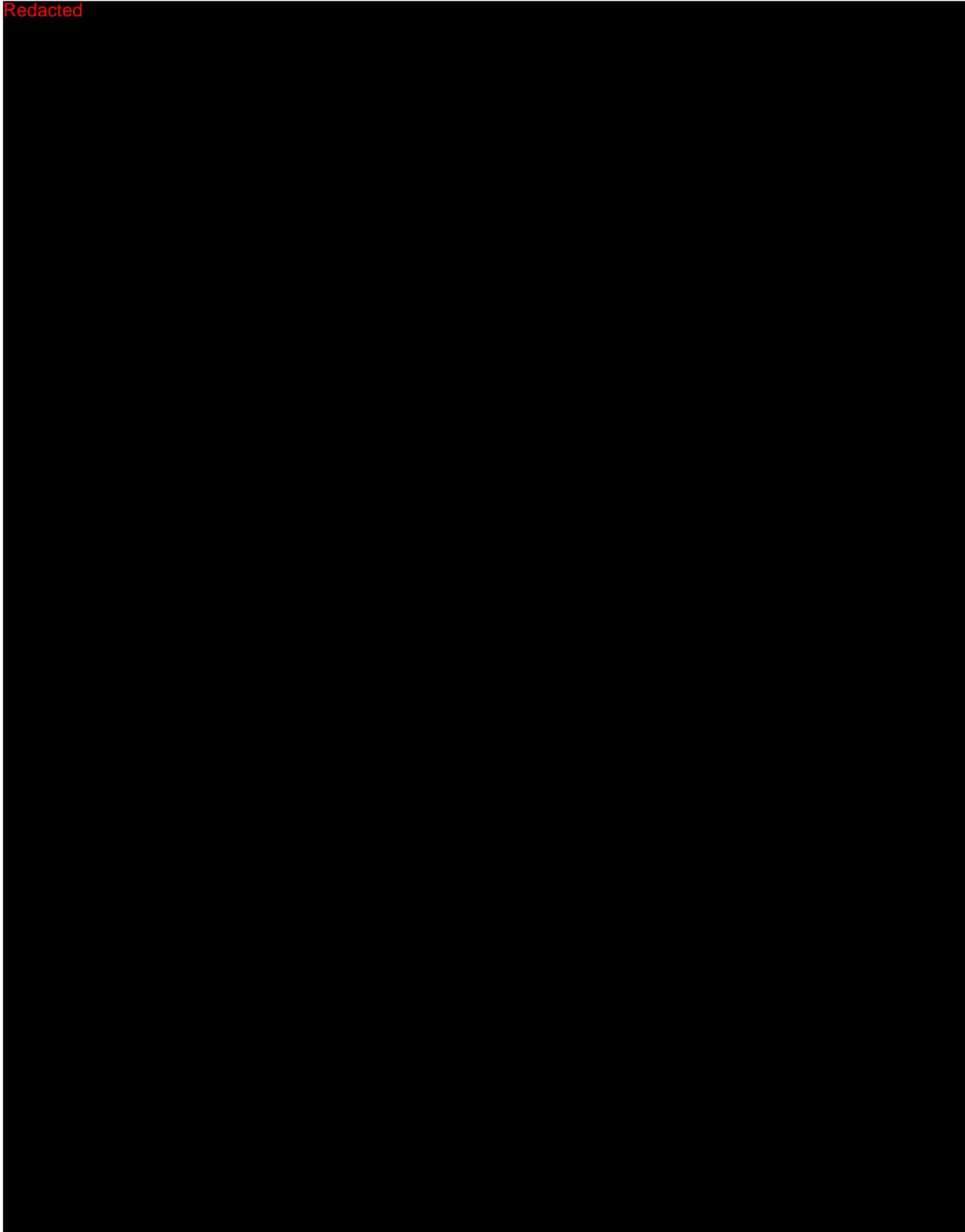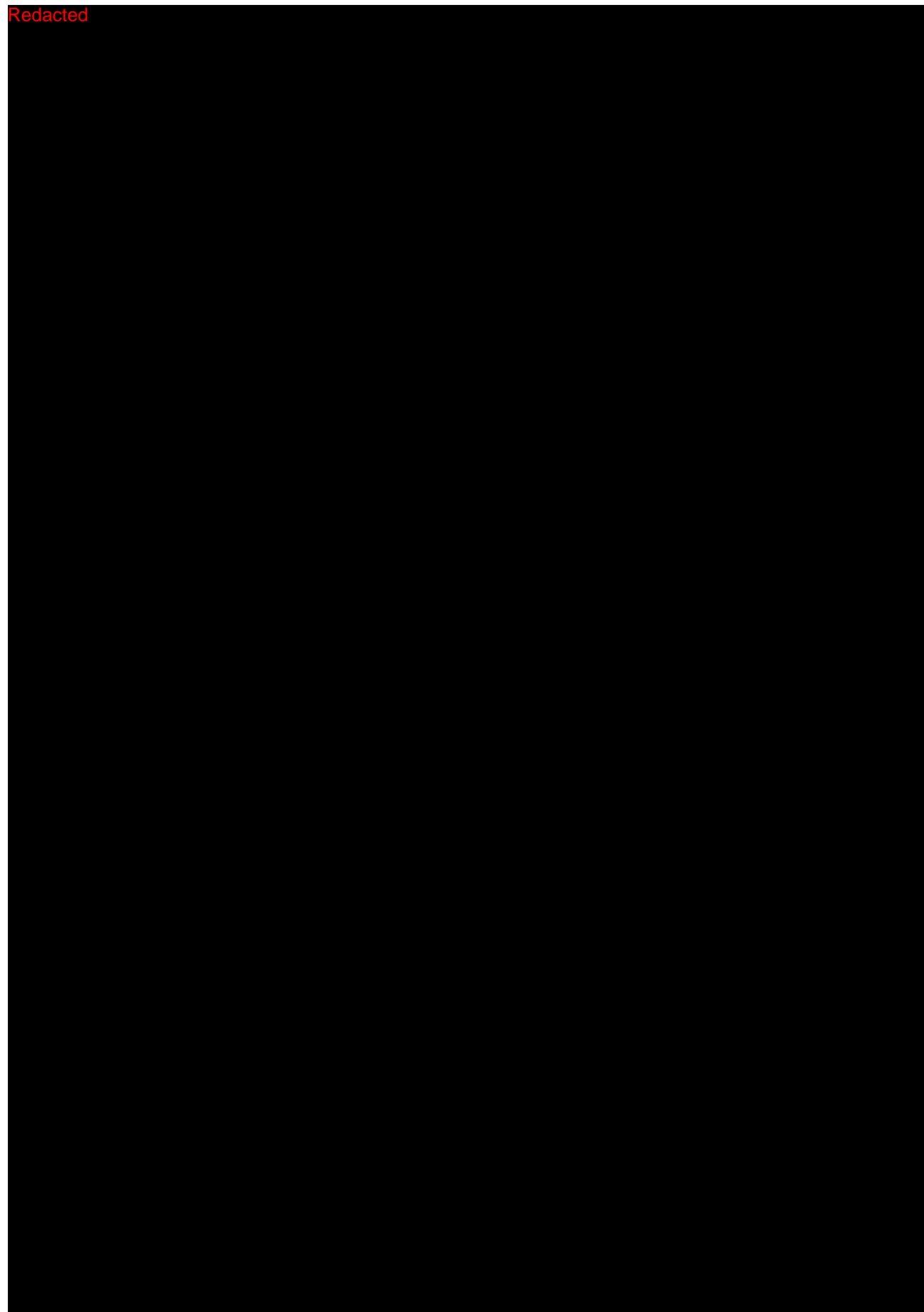
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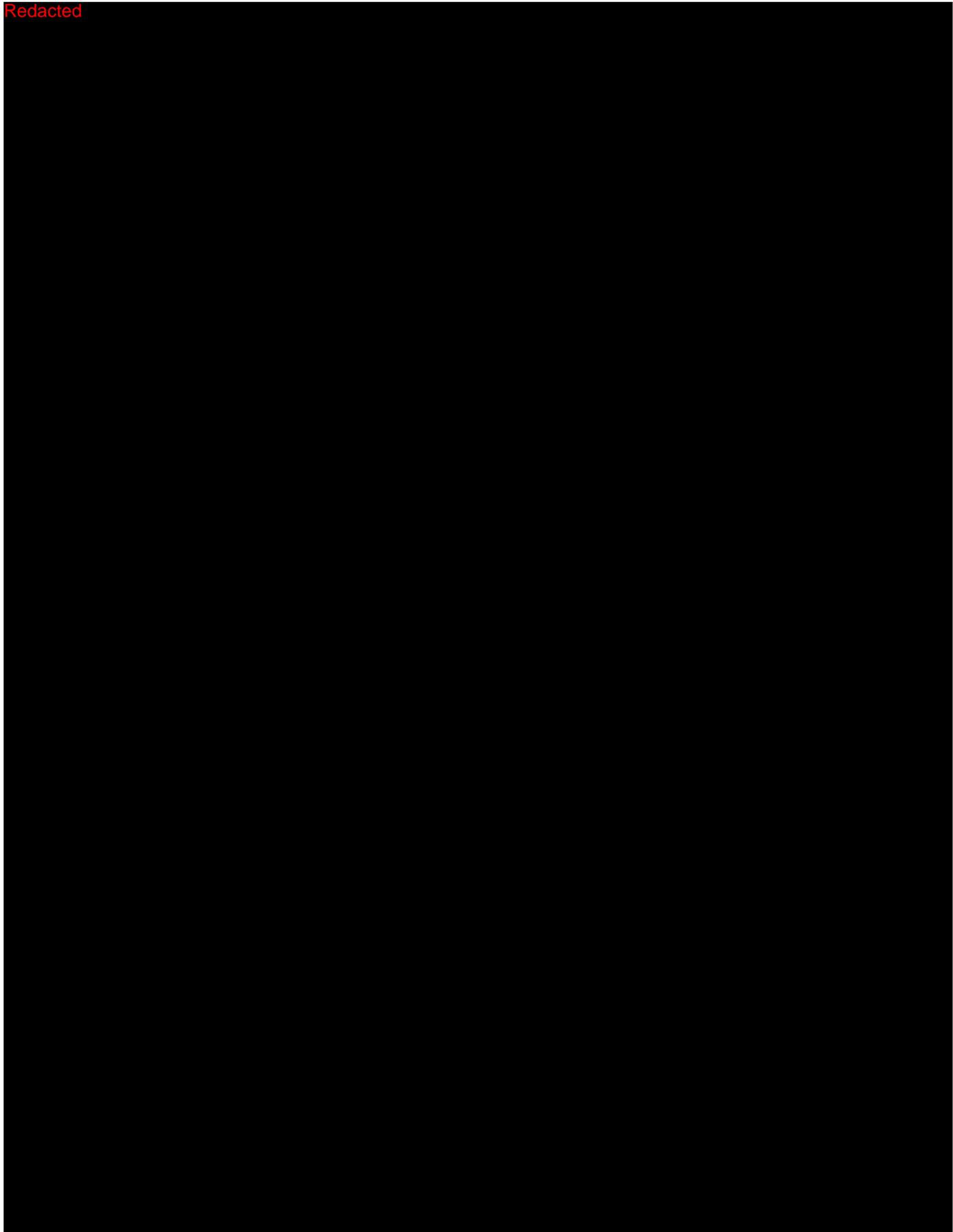
Annex to 2010-04-22-13 UDRP

ANNEX TO BOARD SUBMISSION NO. 2010-04-22-13

SUBMISSION TITLE: **UDRP Status Briefing**

History of the UDRP

The Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP) was created in 1999. The initial idea for a uniform policy was proposed by WIPO, in recommendations called for in the US White Paper on the Management of Internet Domain Names. The Domain Name Supporting Organization (DNSO) considered WIPO's recommendations, and the DNSO Names Council ultimately forwarded consensus position recommendations to the Board on a uniform dispute resolution policy. The Board then directed ICANN's President to convene a representative working group to draft plans for the implementation of the DNSO Council policy. The Board approved the UDRP on 24 October 1999. Since the UDRP was enacted, over 30,000 UDRP complaints have been commenced with ICANN approved dispute resolution providers.[1]

Two documents are required for universal, uniform operation of the UDRP. The first is the policy itself, at http://www.icann.org/en/dndr/udrp/policy.htm, setting out the scope of relief and the basis for mandatory administrative hearings that may be brought. The second document is the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Rules"), at http://www.icann.org/en/dndr/udrp/uniform-rules.htm, which provide the baseline procedural requirements that must be followed in a UDRP proceeding, such as required notice to a respondent, time for filing a response, and standardization of a practice for appointing of the administrative panel in every UDRP proceeding.

The UDRP has not been amended since Board approval in October 1999. As the UDRP was created through the predecessor to the GNSO policy development process (PDP), substantive changes to the UDRP are appropriately achieved through a new GNSO PDP. Certain changes to Rules may also be appropriately achieved through a GNSO PDP, such as changes in length of time to take certain actions, or required

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[1] A review of the WIPO and National Arbitration Forum (NAF) websites list over 30,000 cases in their historical databases of commenced UDRP proceedings. There are other UDRP providers for which historical information is not as easily accessed, and general trends show that WIPO and NAF combined oversee more than 75% of UDRP proceedings commenced in recent years.

filings. The Board recently approved a change to the Rules that staff recommended – and the community largely agreed – was administrative in nature and did not require the initiation of a PDP. The Board approved changing the Rules to allow for electronic filing of complaints (previously required in hard copy), so long as hard copy notification that a complaint has been filed is provided to a respondent.

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UDRP Providers

UDRP Proceedings may only be handled by dispute resolution providers approved by ICANN. There are currently four approved providers:[2]

1. WIPO, approved 1 December 1999

2. The National Arbitration Forum (NAF), approved 23 December 1999

3. Asian Domain Name Dispute Resolution Centre (ADNDRC), approved 28 February 2002

4. Czech Arbitration Court (CAC), approved 23 January 2008

ICANN staff is currently working with two organizations seeking to serve as UDRP dispute resolution providers. Staff will be seeking approval to post the proposals

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[2] Two providers (CPR: International Institute for Conflict Prevention and Resolution and eResolution) were previously approved but are no longer accepting complaints.

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(when ready) for public comment, and after public comment, staff will provide the proposals to the Board for consideration.

Provider Approval Process

When the UDRP was implemented, there was an indication that "The Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) is currently undertaking a review of the UDRP, and will include the approval process for dispute-resolution providers as part of this review." See http://www.icann.org/en/dndr/udrp/provider-approval-process.htm. In the interim, 10 required elements for applications were set forth on that approval process page. In 2003, the GNSO conducted a survey to prioritize issues relating to the UDRP, as seen in a UDRP Issue table, and raised the issue of "[s]hould standards for accrediting providers and panelists be promulgated?". This issue was ranked fourth in level of import, and there is no further mention of the issue available on the GNSO Issues page. As a result, the Approval process listed as "provisional" in 2000 has remained in effect.

Once providers are approved, ICANN does not currently have a process for obtaining commitments for continued adherence to the Rules and the uniformity of UDRP proceedings. There have been recent suggestions that ICANN should have explicit compliance and enforcement powers over the providers, such as through the imposition of contracts with providers. Staff recommends that any such mechanisms could be imposed without changing the UDRP or the Rules, and as a result, the initiation of a PDP is not required. Staff can begin drafting proposals for the creation of these mechanisms, including resource implications for expanding the compliance function to oversee UDRP providers.

Provider Supplemental Rules

Under the Rules, each provider will have supplemental rules, defined as "the rules adopted by the Provider administering a proceeding to supplement these Rules. Supplemental Rules shall not be inconsistent with the Policy or these Rules and shall cover such topics as fees, word and page limits and guidelines, file size and format

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modalities, the means for communicating with the Provider and the Panel, and the form of cover sheets." (Defined in the Rules, at http://www.icann.org/dndr/udrp/uniform-rules.htm.) As part of the approval process, potential providers must provide ICANN with a copy of their proposed supplemental rules, which are reviewed to confirm that there is no conflict with the Rules and the Policy, and also to confirm that the potential provider has an understanding of the policy.

Within the past year, the issue of when and how providers may change their supplemental rules, has come to the forefront. Currently, there is no documented process for how such changes are to be raised with ICANN. Staff is creating a process to allow for the review of all provider supplemental rules currently in place, to assure that providers are operating without conflict with the Rules and the Policy. Staff is also developing a process that likely will require providers to submit proposed supplemental rules changes to ICANN for review and approval, if necessary, before the supplemental rules changes may be implemented. While staff's efforts were underway prior to the two recent public comment periods regarding UDRP-related issues,[4] comments received through both of those consultations stress the import of having a point of review of provider supplemental rules in order to deter providers from making unilateral changes that destroy the uniformity of the UDRP.

There are certain areas where providers are given more latitude in terms of supplemental rule setting – those items specifically mentioned in the Rules (fees, page limits, etc.). To the extent that providers are proposing rules changes solely related to these enumerated topics, staff's review will be truncated. Proposals to modify supplemental rules in ways that are not solely related to these enumerated topics will require additional review, which could include staff requests for clarification, posting for public comment, and in possibly some cases, Board approval.

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[4] The two recent public comment periods were regarding: (1) the allowance of electronic notice in UDRP proceedings (at http://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/public-comment-200908.html#udrp) and (2) the CAC's proposed Supplemental Rules Change (at http://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/public-comment-200912.htm - cac-prop-supp-rules).

The CAC's recent proposal to modify its supplemental rules to include an expedited decision process provided an opportunity to test parts of staff's anticipated review process:

1. Staff reviewed the proposed changes to determine if there was facial conflict between the proposed changes and the Policy and Rules.

2. Staff provided feedback to CAC and sought clarification on certain parts of the proposal.

3. The CAC provided updates and responses to staff questions, and concurred with staff that the proposal be posted for public comment

4. In response to public comment, the CAC elected to withdraw its proposal and instead make a change to its fee schedule only. As fees are explicitly reserved for setting by the Provider, ICANN notified CAC that it ICANN did not take a position on the setting of provider fees.[5]

Submitted by: John O. Jeffrey

Position: General Counsel and Secretary

Date Noted: 15 April 2010

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[5] The CAC supplemental rules change has been the subject of recent controversy and has been raised in correspondence and at the Nairobi public forum. As far as staff is aware, and based on CAC's representations, the CAC supplemental rules change is only a change in fees, and there were no changes made to the extent of review undertaken by the panelists or the scope of decision rendered by the panelists.

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TOPICS BEING CONSIDERED FOR BOARD RETREAT

TOPICS BEING CONSIDERED FOR BOARD RETREAT

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY. IT IS NOT PRIORITIZED. A SMALLER NUMBER OF TOPICS WILL BE ON THE FINAL AGENDA.

1. Technical support staff; numbers and skills
2. Board practices – managing the agenda – distinguishing the important from the urgent
3. Board oversight of key international relationships
4. Internationalising ICANN
5. Strategic placement of offices – Global Outreach
6. Geographic names in new gTLDs; challenges from the ccNSO and the GAC
7. CEO Performance
8. Board Self-review
9. Board Chair Compensation
10. DNS-CERT
11. Training of Board Members on Substantive Topics
12. Selection of Meeting Sites

ICANN Media Clips

ICANN Media Clips

Date Range:

19 February 2010 – 30 March 2010

Mark owners urged to comment in "final" gTLD consultation

International - Adam Smith

Feb. 22, 2010

Trademark owners have been given what may be their last opportunity to comment on proposed rights protection mechanisms in the new generic top-level domain name (gTLD) space, even though the measures will not be finalized before gTLD applicants may have to publish their intentions.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) last week opened up new comment periods on a rapid takedown procedure and a trademark clearinghouse. "It's important that people comment on these proposed trademark protection measures because we want to get them right," ICANN's Karla Valente, the director of communications and product services responsible for the gTLD programme, told *WTR*. "I cannot say for sure but this could be the opportunity for us to close the loop on trademark protection. This comment period is so important because we're getting very close to a final applicant guidebook."

ICANN expects to publish a fourth draft applicant guidebook shortly, with the aim of nailing the text of the final version before the end of the year. Similar rights protection measures have recently been adopted by the .co country-code TLD (see "Top 100 trademarks to be handed special domain name protection").

Meanwhile, in parallel to the trademark protection discussion, the ICANN community has proposed an expression of interest (EOI) programme which would enjoin gTLD applicants to pre-register their string (the letters after the final dot in a web address) in order to participate in the application process. Mark owners are concerned that the EOI programme may go live before the trademark protection measures are settled.

Valente commented that, given the impact of the EOI procedure on the entire programme, brand owners must "monitor very closely what happens with the EOI".

"The EOI is a particularly interesting development," said domain name expert David Taylor, a partner at Lovells. "It would provide visibility on the number of new gTLD applications and be a step in the right direction for those applicants who have invested in launch preparations."

However, for most brand owners it presents a major risk. "While some entities may wish for their EOI to be public, many other entities may not wish their plans to be public," Taylor added. "With brand launches this is often the case. I would hope that ICANN will consider amending the current EOI draft proposal so that it becomes a workable proposition."

Plan for top-level pornography domain gets reprieve
ICANN to reconsider .xxx denial
Kieren McCarthy
Feb. 23, 2010

A plan to create a specific area of the Internet for pornography has been given a reprieve by a distinguished panel of judges.

The panelists - who included a former International Court of Justice judge - told Internet overseeing body ICANN in a majority decision that it was wrong to reject an application for the top-level domain dot-xxx three years ago.

That decision made by ICANN's Board in March 2007 was "not consistent with the application of neutral, objective, and fair documented policy," the panel concluded. It also decided in favor of the company behind the dot-xxx application, ICM Registry, in three of the remaining four issues under dispute and ordered ICANN to pick up fees and expenses totaling $475,000.

As a result of the panel's declaration, the ICANN Board will now reconsider the dot-xxx application and decision at its meeting in Nairobi next month, opening the way for dot-xxx's possible inclusion into the Internet's "root."

However, the ICANN Board is not obliged to adopt the panel's findings, and an initial response by its management made it clear that the organization is keeping its options open. CEO Rod Beckstrom, blogging about the decision, pointed out that the panel decision was not unanimous and that there had been significant community opposition to the application.

That post drew immediate criticism from some in the Internet community who felt ICANN was attempting to backtrack from the panel decision, something Beckstrom subsequently refuted. "I was not involved in the history of this issue so I have no vested interest. I was trying to highlight the possible things that can happen now. In too many cases, people act like everything was an easy decision."

Beckstrom pointed out that it is the Board that will ultimately decide what to do and that his job as CEO is to ensure ICANN's staff do the best job possible in providing the Board with the objective advice and information it needs.

In that respect, ICANN's chairman, Peter Dengate Thrush, is now in an interesting position. As chair, he will direct Board discussions over the panel's report, but prior to his chairmanship he was one of five Board members that voted against the decision to reject dot-xxx, making a strong public statement against the vote and noting the "particularly thin argument" that the Board made in rejecting dot-xxx. It was this same argument that was also rejected by the independent review panel.

ICM Registry chairman Stuart Lawley hailed the declaration as a victory not just for the company but also "the ICANN model of private sector management of the Domain Name System." And remarkably, considering it lost the dispute, ICANN's Beckstrom also recognized that the case was successful "from an outside perspective," telling us that it had put back an issue in front of the ICANN Board that it previously had no intention of revisiting.

The man who headed the Board at the time of the vote, former ICANN chairman Vint Cerf, told us that he was disappointed with the result since he agreed with the dissenting opinion and reasoning of one of the three panelists. Nonetheless, he welcomed the process itself. "I think the fact of the IRP (Independent Review Process) is important to ICANN processes so regardless of the outcome, it strengthens ICANN because it is a process that allows response to complaints."

What was decided

Two main issues with respect to the dot-xxx application were decided in favour of ICM Registry.

First, the panel decided that the ICANN Board had been wrong to reopen the question of whether there was a suitable "sponsoring community" for dot-xxx after it had already agreed that the company had passed this step and approved a decision to enter into contractual negotiations.

In so doing, the panel rejected the recollections of ICANN's former chair, vice-chair, and president as "not adequately refuting" the various public statements made about the process for new top-level domains and the dot-xxx application.

And secondly, the panel decided that the final vote to reject the application was "not consistent with the application of neutral, objective and fair documented policy" - i.e. the application was treated differently to other applications such as those for dot-mobi, dot-jobs and dot-travel.

The panel also found "grounds for questioning the neutral and objective performance of the Board" and said that the four reasons the Board gave for rejecting the dot-xxx application were "not fully coherent".

The current Board members, the majority of which were not on the Board at the time of the vote will need to decide whether it agrees with the panel findings and then what the implications of that are.

ICM's Lawley is quite clear about what he expects. "I don't want this to become a huge debate all about ICANN's bylaws or another cycle of publishing contracts for public review. We have been through five iterations of the contract; it is on the table and we will be expecting ICANN to execute on that contract. It is a question of 'is ICANN going to do the right thing or not?'"

Why the review is just as important as the decision

Regardless of the decision, the review process itself has been recognized as a crucial step in ongoing efforts to embed an open and multi-stakeholder decision-making body at the heart of the Internet's domain name system. Under the ICANN model, all those affected by changes in the Internet's infrastructure – whether governments, business, or individual Internet users – are entitled to an equal say in its evolution. It is especially ironic then that it is the Board's decision to deny dot-xxx that has been subject to review and rejected.

It was initial approval of the dot-xxx application in 2005 that sparked vigorous opposition from governments, particularly the US government, which had been the focus of a determined campaign by right-wing Christian groups. This proved particularly difficult for ICANN's management and Board since at the time, governments were debating the organization's very existence at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

The review panel's declaration makes specific mention of an apparent "volte face" in ICANN's approach to dot-xxx as soon as it received a letter from the US government recommending that the top-level domain not be introduced. This was followed by letters from a number of other countries attacking dot-xxx and led to furious diplomacy on the part of ICANN's then-president and CEO Paul Twomey, who was put in the impossible position of trying to placate governments while at the same time arguing that ICANN needed to remain independent of government influence.

In the view of acknowledged expert on Internet governance, Professor for International Communication Policy and Regulation at the University of Aarhus, Wolfgang Kleinwächter, the dot-xxx decision came down to these high-level politics. "In my eyes the ICANN Board was afraid to risk a confrontation with the GAC (Governmental Advisory Committee) and in particular the US government."

Kleinwächter points out that the decision was made while ICANN was still beholden to the US government under their Joint Project Agreement (JPA) – an agreement that was replaced with a more autonomous Affirmation of Commitments (AoC) this November. "I would be interested to see how such a process would work under the AoC framework," Kleinwächter notes.

Ultimately, ICANN survived the WSIS process and set about fixing holes in its constitution, not least of which was a perceived gap in the organization's accountability and transparency. One of the key elements of that accountability was the Independent Review Process (IRP), created in December 2002 but unused until ICM Registry filed its complaint in 2007.

As such, the successful conclusion of the first IRP complaint represents the first time that an ICANN Board decision has been reviewed by external experts.

The process wasn't fast, or cheap, with ICM's Lawley telling us initial estimates were a factor of nine out. It ended up costing the company $3.5 million and took two years to complete. ICANN's costs, separate from the $475,000 costs, are expected to top $2 million.

The fact that it was the first use of the IRP process also led to the unusual situation that three of the five issues under discussion were about the process itself.

Ultimately, the panel reached several crucial conclusions: that its declaration should not be considered binding on the ICANN Board, but that the review process itself would not be "deferential" to decisions by the ICANN Board.

The result is that the ICANN Board is free to make whatever subsequent decisions it wants but that it can expect panel reports to be blunt and free-thinking in their assessment.

The panel sidestepped the issue of whether ICANN should be subject to international law (instead of just Californian law) but did decide that the organization should not be entitled to use solely the "business

judgment rule" – which would have put a far higher burden of proof on the applicant before a decision can be made in their favor. Instead, ICANN was held to a "good faith" standard.

The result of the whole process is a clear demonstration of accountability at the top level of the Internet. It is now the unenviable task of ICANN's current Board to determine how to respond to strong criticism of a previous decision, especially since the organization is due to open up applications to many more top-level domains in the next year – something that former chairman Cerf thinks will provoke similar issues to the dot-xxx application. ®

WIRED

Domain Name Czar Seeks .OnlineUnity

By Ryan Singel
March 5, 2010

For the last few years, policy makers and netizens have been battling over net neutrality — the idea that the net is and should remain an open, fair platform where packets flow freely and web services just work, everywhere and without favoritism. And they're trying to find the best way to guarantee that.

The problem is hardly new. ICANN, the little-understood, policy-setting body that's in charge of the net's address system, has grappled with it, mostly successfully, for years. Now the agency — and its energetic new leader, Rod Beckstrom — is gearing up for some of its biggest challenges yet, as new powers such as China come online in force, and the U.S. cedes some of its historical control.

"Some governments seem to think that ICANN should be engaged in regulating what kind of content is on the net," said David Johnson, a senior fellow at the Center for Democracy and Technology. "The whole point of ICANN was to keep the domain name system from being used in that way."

Net neutrality is most commonly framed in terms of a commercial threat from service providers hoping to profit by privileging certain services and content over others. But an equal, if less discussed, neutrality problem is quickly rising to the fore in the form of governments seeking to control information inside their borders.

ICANN's most epic battle started in 2003, when Verisign, which has the ICANN contract to run the business of selling and administering .com and .net, decided it would re-route users who typed in non-existent .com domain names to a search engine page with ads. The move was rightly criticized as a security threat and a violation of net protocols, and ICANN ordered Verisign to remove the "feature," though Verisign later filed a federal lawsuit over it.

That battle cemented ICANN's role as the defender of the net's inner architecture from self-serving mega-corporations. Now, the group's biggest challenge is trying to keep the internet, and all the countries that connect to it, united.

That responsibility now rests on the shoulders of Beckstrom.

Beckstrom might seem like just another a blond-haired, charming Silicon Valley entrepreneur who rides his bike to his office in Palo Alto, but his job isn't to make millions for himself and venture capitalists. At least not anymore.

He's now the guy who keeps the internet from forking into a collection of squabbling intranets. Asked what his job is, Beckstrom's answer is concise: "We want to keep the internet global."

That's a tough mandate as countries that feel threatened by the internet continually make moves toward breaking it apart. Witness Iran banning Gmail in favor of a state-run service, or China's firewall blocking of sites like Facebook.

The next logical step in that progression is deciding to break with the protocols that unite the net and turn, for example, China's internet into a massive intranet.

ICANN is nominally in charge of the internet's policy around site names and addresses. It sets the rules on who can sell domain names, what language domain names are in, whether a domain name violates someone's trademark and how people find their way from those names to the numerically addressed servers that host them online. In a system that works by connecting the world's computers together, ICANN is oddly both powerful and powerless.

Beckstrom is in many ways the online equivalent of the mayor of Switzerland, with an arsenal of peacekeeping tools pretty much limited to his reputation.

The agency was chartered as an independent corporation by the U.S. government in 1998, when it wrested the net's root file from net pioneer Jon Postel. And the Commerce Department has kept close (some say too close) a watch over it ever since.

Beckstrom became a known quantity in D.C. after a year stint running the National Cyber Security Center in the Department of Homeland Security. He was hired as ICANN chief in July 2009, in no small part for his D.C. connections, which ICANN hoped would convince Washington to trust it.

That plan paid off on September 30, just months after his tenure started, when ICANN and the Commerce Department inked a new operating agreement that declared that "ICANN is independent and is not controlled by any one entity" and that reviews of its performance will be done by the global internet community, not just the Department of Commerce.

Until then, the agency was closely controlled by the U.S. government, to the point that it required daily federal sign-off on changes to the internet's root file, which tells the world's computers where to look to find authoritative addresses.

If Beckstrom has been instrumental in convincing the U.S. that ICANN won't go rogue, he now needs to convince the rest of the world's governments that the newly freed ICANN is a neutral body that makes decisions independently and fairly.

But CDT's Johnson says Beckstrom's challenge goes beyond proving ICANN's independence.

"The need to convince governments that it is not an arm of the U.S. government is pretty well understood," Johnson said. "His greater challenge is to keep it from being under the control of governments generally."

In an interview with Wired.com, Beckstrom described the internet's history as an arc — starting as a U.S. military research project to a decentralized, global network whose size and complexity can only be guessed at.

ICANN needs to follow the same path, according to Beckstrom.

It also needs to start becoming more innovative, he said. ICANN has moved glacially to approve new top-level domains, such as .aero, .post and .travel — something that Beckstom argues is holding the net back.

"One of the least innovative spaces in the internet is the global top-level domains," Beckstrom said. "It's an anomaly. When the internet opens up, then there is innovation."

Beckstrom is moving to make the approval process for new TLDs faster. The idea is not without controversy — the Bush Administration threatened to block .XXX from entering the net's root file after ICANN's approval of a .XXX domain for pornographic sites led to a backlash from religious groups like Focus on the Family. ICANN subsequently canceled the application, giving in to the political pressure. That proposal is now likely to come back up for approval, after an independent review ruled in February that ICANN violated its own policies when it revoked the approval of .XXX.

While opening up new domains is sure to create other controversies, Beckstrom argues that a flowering of new TLDs will lead to innovations that we can't predict.

That's not a sentiment that's universally shared. Some say there's plenty of domains to choose from, given that every country has its own, in addition to the more commonly used .net, .com, .info. Domain names have also grown considerably cheaper and can be gotten for less than $10 a year.

"I don't think that creates innovation," said David Farber, a distinguished professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon who has been closely watching ICANN since its creation. "I think that creates rapid confusion."

Farber also said that ICANN needs to counter its reputation for holding meetings in fancy places, where members live the high life on fees paid to ICANN through domain registrations.

Some see echoes of that reputation in Beckstrom's salary.

His leadership has not come cheaply to ICANN, which signed him to a three-part contract that pays him $750,000 a year, with the possibility of a bonus up to $195,000 annually. Beckstrom, an author and entrepreneur, agreed to set aside any conflicts of interest and forego lucrative speaking gigs related to his management book, *The Starfish and the Spider*.

So far however, ICANN's progress has largely kept attention away from Beckstrom's salary.

In October, ICANN announced it was finally going to allow top-level domains (e.g. .gov, .com, .uk) in non-Latin characters, so that domain names can be registered in languages that use characters other than A to Z. Such domain names will have to use the same character set (e.g. http://allgreekcharacters.greektopleveldomian, not cocacola.greektopleveldomain) for the full name. That ban on hybrid names should prevent most trademark owners from having to register "theircompanyname.everynewdomain".

Officially, the move was intended to make it easier for people who speak Greek or one of India's 22 officially recognized languages to get online. But just as critically, the move was meant to deaden the argument that ICANN is biased in favor of countries such as the United States, whose languages use Latin characters.

"It was a psychic move," Beckstrom said. "It is offensive to be told you have to change your language to use the internet."

Beckstrom belittles arguments that the net will Balkanize with the new names. As long as DNS and search engines continue to work, people will still be able to traverse the net — no matter what languages the URLs are in, he said.

Moreover, internationalized domains could help to preserve local cultures, even as it promotes global interconnection, Beckstrom argued. He pointed to the example of the top-level domain for speakers of Catalan. The domain name has created a cultural space for speakers to converge in and helped re-invigorate a culture that is geographically dispersed.

Beckstrom points to examples like that to explain why he's pushing ICANN to radically open the process of introducing new gTLDs — essentially allowing .anything that anyone is willing to pay to sponsor. The logical new ones? Pretty much any of the top 100 internet destinations: .wikipedia, .google, .microsoft, .facebook.

That would mean you'd be able to type in just Google into your browser and be taken there immediately, or have a Facebook page at JoanSmith.facebook

There are other possibilities, too — think .paris and .nyc, where you could have smithsbakery.paris and smithsbakery.nyc owned by different businesses. Or you could have a .gay or a .news TLD.

The proposal has trademark owners howling that they will have to spend too much to buy domain names in each of the new TLDs.

But Beckstrom says ICANN has worked hard to craft protections and even build notifications for trademark users into the domain name system. Beyond that, it's not ICANN's job to pre-emptively police trademarks — which are fraught with jurisdictional issues.

"Go enforce your trademarks in court," Beckstrom said.

Beckstrom points to the new .post TLD, controlled by the United Postal Union that's intended to create a trusted home for postal services around the globe — and eventually as a possible way for people to create email addresses whose owners are verified by their local post office — e.g. john.citizen@marseille.french.post is only given out after John Citizen goes to his local post office and shows appropriate identity documents.

The equation is simple for the Silicon Valley-trained Beckstrom.

"Adding more gTLDs will add innovation," Beckstrom said.

CDT's Johnson warns of other "innovation" that Beckstrom has to be sure not to create.

"I think ICANN has to be the conscience of the global community and resist the temptation to go beyond its core mission," Johnson said. "It's not just about them making governments happy. It's about making sure they don't get too happy."

Africa must bring its voice to ICANN

Rebecca Wanjiku

Mar. 8, 2010

There are many African governments and citizens who do not understand the role of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

For some, ICANN should operate in the bottom later ensuring that we have internet access and that the pipes are faster. Others think that ICANN should be involved in the running of domain registries, which are in shambles and in some cases fighting over petty issues. Others think that ICANN is there to fund them; talk of reliance on aid.

Of course ICANN has no role in all these things and what it points is that more outreach is needed and maybe ICANN should have an office in Africa.

But how? According to Rod Beckstrom, 90 percent of ICANN contributions come from North America, so that may be the reason why we have 3 offices in the US and none in Africa.

That makes sense; if Africa does not contribute anything, how will the office be supported? So, for Africa to be on level terms, then we must also be willing to contribute, but am not sure how when our registry operations are still manual.

I was chatting with Rafik Dammak, who accuses me of complaining or whining too much but then, what do I do?

Rafik told me of how the various constituencies within ICANN are always looking for participants but what do you do when they dont contribute to those meetings and in some cases stay outside within the coffee houses instead of meeting rooms?

Yes, its good to have geographical representations but we also need to start bringing something on the table and contributing to the debate more than we do currently.

Regarding the financial contributions, I have no words; will leave it for the others.

COMPUTERWORLD KENYA

Security: ICANN President talks of balancing transparency and diplomacy

Rebecca Wanjiku

Mar. 11, 2010

In the months leading up to the ICANN meeting in Nairobi, majority of discussions and conference calls were dominated by security concerns and emergency meetings with some people wondering whether the meeting will take place or not.

Eventually some people decided to stay away. Yes, security is a concern but for everyone and no one can blame anyone for choosing safety over risk. Well, I had my opinions about the security debate, which have been expressed in blog posts scattered online.

However, it was nice to hear an admnission from Rod Beckstrom, ICANN president and CEO that perhaps the whole security debate was not handled well.

At a meeting with the Government Advisory Committee, Rod said that ICANN is striving to balance transparency and diplomacy and in this case, that balance may not have been well struck.

He was responding to the statement by Alice Munyua, CCK board, who alluded to the fact that the whole security saga may not have demonstrated respect to the local organizing committee and that the debate was dominated by security and not by serious issues.

Here is the verbatim GAC speech by Alice:

"We thank the ICANN board and the ICANN community for resolving to get on with the meeting in Kenya despite the challenges and note that the geographic rotation of meeting locations is an important feature unique and special to ICANN.

However, we need to ask ourselves "what do these ICANN meetings leave behind in the various regions and/or countries?"

Kenya had ideals regarding the possible domino effect/impact that this meeting would have had in the EA region in terms of understanding ICANN, increased participation in ICANN and understanding of Internet policy and Internet governance generally (as you probably know, Kenya has offered to host the 2011 IGF).

But we spent most of the months leading up to the meeting occupied and dealing with the meetings security issues due to thebadly handled communication around it.

And this is not to deny that there were credible fears around the meeting security, particularly when it touches on the world's common terrorism incidents, but communicating these same fears and efforts

being made to ensure everyone's safety could have been handled more diplomatically and respectfully for Kenya as host country, as a recognition the hard work by the local organisers and ICANN staff.

We note that nearly all of the contracted parties (registries, registrars) are missing (physically) and have chosen to have parallel meetings in NY and Washington. What does this say about the ICANN processes? Has ICANN's

foundation commitment to the introduction of competition and diversity in the DNS on the decline? If all of the registries and significant majority of registrars are based in North America what does this say? Is there a competition framework? Is it time to begin to explore the possibilities of a global one perhaps? What will happen to the new gTLD's with registration costs that are prohibitive for most developing countries'?

Finally, we congratulate ICANN commitment to the principle of

transparency, with the very active use of society networking tools, like twitter but we do believe that issues that affect a country's prospects should be handled more sensitively and respectively because they do tend to have an impact on not only general effectiveness and efficiency of organising these kind of meetings but the impact is broader than the internet and includes issues of investment, tourism among others.

If the intentions, with the various processes including the AOC are to work towards internationalising ICANN, then ICANN must respect diversity and work more towards understanding other perspectives and interests.

ICANN boss creates a stir with DNS security warning

Monika Ermert

Mar. 12, 2010

Rod Beckstrom, head of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the body which administers the internet, has warned of attacks on the domain name system (DNS), attracting criticism from domain owners in the process. Beckstrom warned government representatives at the 37th ICANN meeting in Nairobi that the DNS is currently experiencing a never-before seen level of attacks and that blackouts are a possibility. The ICANN CEO was underlining the necessity of ICANN-led initiatives for improving security, including a global intervention force (CERT) for the DNS. However, the warnings met with a frosty reception from operators of country address zones. Speaking on behalf of the group of country domain operators (ccTLDs), Chris Disspain from Australian registry auDA, judged Beckstrom's warnings to be alarmist and even incitement.

Country registries (ccNSO) also see no particular danger at present. In response to a commentary from US company NeuStar, ICANN director Steve Crocker stated that there had even been a slight fall in distributed denial of service attacks (dDoS). Kurtis Lindkvist from the Swedish root operator netnod reported no particular incidents. What has particularly angered the country address registries which make up ICANN and which include Denic, is that Beckstrom presented his alleged horror scenario directly to governments.

According to Disspain, ccTLD managers fear that Beckstrom's warning could cause governments to get the wrong end of the stick. Disspain reckons that In the worst case, this could affect the operation of country domains. ccTLD managers are worried that regulation may be imposed from above. Disspain also warns that Beckstrom's talk will be grist to the mill of those who disagree with the concept of self-regulation embodied by ICANN. Beckstrom has justified his approach by citing informed sources as indicating that some governments wanted to block the DNS-CERT idea right from the start.

The global Computer Emergency Response Team for DNS operators (DNS CERT) will, according to ICANN's proposal, provide a universally accessible contact point and take responsibility for a range of monitoring and warning services. In the event of attacks on the DNS, the CERT will coordinate and where necessary offer direct support to affected providers. The role is more or less that of a standard CERT. Lindkvist has therefore suggested that the oversight of threats on the web offered by existing CERTs might be seen as rendering a specific DNS-CERT unnecessary.

Crocker, head of ICANN security committee (SSAC) also warned his CEO to concentrate on working together to fix various weaknesses in the DNS, rather than blabbing out security warnings. Crocker had earlier announced a meeting to discuss concrete progress in DNSSEC at the forthcoming ICANN meeting

in Brussels. According to Crocker's statistics, by the end of the year, at least 19 country registries will have fully implemented the protocol, which is used to authenticate DNS responses.

Jim Galvin announced that .org will officially start using DNSSEC in June, but that initially only two providers will offer signing of their domains. It is still not clear how secure transfer of signed domains can be implemented. A bug in Bind which causes serious problems with obsolete key material also remains unfixed.

BUSINESS DAILY

ICANN plots change to unlimited domain names

Victoria Juma

Mar. 11,2010

ICANN, an Internet regulatory body, is poised to shake up the world of branding and marketing by introducing online corporate identities.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, responsible for issuing domain names (Internet address suffixes like .com and .org) is holding discussions with stakeholders in the run up to the introduction of an unlimited domain names policy that will allow anyone to register an Internet address of their choice, provided it has not been taken up.

This will see, for example, the registration of addresses with suffixes like .cat, .food, and even personal names.

ICANN CEO Rod Beckstrom told Business Daily the plan is meant to boost Internet use and transparency, adding that the new domain names, also called gTLDS, have commercial implications just like the earlier versions like .com.

With growing Internet use around the world and especially in developing countries, businesses see it as a promising media on which new business models can be created and marketing promoted to supplement other arenas.

The e-commerce opportunities include online sales, advertising, subscription services, and brand building.

According to the latest statistics from Miniwatts Group, an Internet marketing research firm, the world has about 1.7 billion Internet users while Africa has 67 million, representing a growth rate of over 1,300 per cent since 2000 when the continent had only 4.5 million users.

Marketing analysts say the new domain names present mixed opportunities, depending on the scale of operations a company has.

"For small businesses and even individuals promoting their services, the domain names will offer a personal touch that can help in marketing," said Maina Kirugo, a marketing consultant.

However, he said, the new addresses will at best muddy the waters for established corporations which will be better off sticking to the old domain names like .com which is usually associated with companies or government agencies.

"I would encourage companies to maintain their .com identities because venturing into the less popular and untested domain names could water down their brands," he added.

Companies protested

When ICANN announced the move to roll out unrestricted addresses, companies around the world protested, saying it would fuel cybersquatting, forcing them to spend more to counter the vice.

Cybersquatting refers to registering a domain name with the intent to profit from the goodwill of a trade mark belonging to someone else.

The cybersquatter then offers to sell the domain to the person or company who owns a trademark at an inflated price.

Often, because the illegally registered domain names carry an important variant of the company's name, the fraudsters end up being paid millions of dollars to reverse the "brand-jacking".

According to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), there were 2,156 reported cases of cybersquatting in 2006, representing an 18 per cent increase over 2006 and a 48 per cent increase over 2005.

Companies around the world have been registering one or all of their brands on the few domain names in a bid to fend off the fraudsters.

The businesses fear that a multiplicity of domain names will push them to register their brands and pay annual fees to rights holders of each of the new domains who pay ICANN a non-refundable deposit of $55,000 and $185,000 for evaluation.

But analysts say the fears are unfounded since the new domain names will lead to fragmentation that will not harm established businesses.

For instance, a company involved in sale of computer hardware is unlikely to be affected by registration of its name on a .food domain.

The fragmentation is likely to puncture the big business of re-selling domain names.

Some of the most expensive domain names have been sold from $2 upwards, riding on the back of their unique names that draw in massive traffic.

Sex.com which was sold for $14 million back in 2006 is set to be auctioned next week, with bids starting from $1 million.
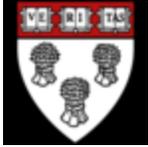
Harvard Law Record

Green light for an internet red light district?

Mattais Ketterman

Mar. 11, 2010

It is not as if there weren't enough pornography on the web. Exact figures are difficult to come by, but estimates of the number of websites dedicated to pornographic material range from 1 to 25 percent. And soon there will be more. In fact, a whole Top Level Domain or TLD (the letters after the last dot in an address, such as .com or .biz) will soon be dedicated to "adult entertainment": the new TLD dot triple x, or ".xxx".

In a decision published on February 19, a top-notch three judge panel ruled in favor of an association of adult entertainment companies, represented by ICM Registry, and declared that the private corporation responsible for assigning new Top-Level Domains, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN, was wrong to deny ICM Registry their application for the new "voluntary adult TLD" .xxx.

The history of the conflict, which has serious legal implications for the development of the international domain name systems, started when ICANN opened the address space to allow new industry-sponsored, generic (that is, not-country related) Top Level Domains. The sex industry soon saw the potential to generate more revenue by adding websites ending with .xxx. On its website, ICM Registry prides itself with providing, with the new .xxx TLD, a "greater degree of confidence and certainty to [the] online experience" of "willing adult consumers of adult entertainment". The creation of .xxx would lead to a "credible, self-regulated forum for all stakeholders to discuss and actively respond to concerns about online adult entertainment." Discussing and actively responding to such concerns was probably not chiefly on the mind of ICM Registry when it applied for the TLD. Rather, as domain names such as sex.xxx could be sold for a lot of money, considerable financial interests were at stake.

As Lisa LaMotta of Forbes.com reported, the first two most valuable domain names are related to pornography. Sex.com was the first domain to break eight-figured barriers in 2005 by changing owners for $12 million. Porn.com was sold in 2007 for $9.5 million. But financial concerns were not chiefly among those with which regulator ICANN had to grapple.

Having presented itself as a technical regulator and not as guarantor of the Internet morals, ICANN had always insisted that it would only apply technical standards in assessing applications for new Top Level Domains. But after having first decided, in 2005, that the application by ICM Registry for the new Top Level Domain met all required criteria, the Governmental Advisory Committee uniting a number of

states and advising the ICANN Board in its decision intervened. The Board reconsidered its decision and ultimately denied ICM Registry the new address space.

The Independent Review Panel now found that this "reconsideration … was not consistent with the application of neutral, objective and fair documented policy." Harvard Law School Professor Jack Goldsmith, who provided an expert report on which ICM Registry relied, used even stronger words, saying that "the clearly fictitious basis ICANN gave for denying ICM's application" is "most obvious".

As the Panel pointed out, the change in opinion of ICANN could be traced back to an outcry of governments that started with an August 11, 2005, letter by Michael D. Gallagher, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the U.S. Department of Commerce, evidencing a "volte face in the position of the United States Government". This development was caused, according to the Panel, by "a cascade of protests by American domestic organizations such as the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family."

While DOC officials seemed to first approve the new TLD, they were galvanized into opposition by critique by the Religious Right, including figures such as Jim Dobson, who had, as the Panel writes, "influential access to high level officials of the U.S. Administration."

ICANN thus faced a dilemma: If it accepted the .xxx domain it would show that it was immune to interference by the US government. This was an important issue at that time, as the so-called World Summit on the Information Society process was ongoing at the time. The process explicitly aimed at creating a more international (read: less US-influenced) Internet Governance. But if ICANN did not reconsider the introduction of .xxx, there might have been a serious backlash from the Bush Administration, which was under pressure from Christian Conservatives. "We're damned if we do", ICANN Chairman Vint Cerf is quoted as saying in 2005, "and damned if we don't." In the end, ICANN refused to allow .xxx. Now, five years later, they were again "damned" for this decision.

No deference necessary

The three judge panel consisted of a former President of the International Court of Justice, Stephen M. Schwebel, as Chair, the former president of both the London Court of International Arbitration and the World Bank Administrative Tribunal, Jan Paulsson, and Dickran M. Tevrizian, a U.S. federal judge for the Central District of California. The majority first underlined that "the judgments of the ICANN Board are to be reviewed and appraised by the Panel objectively, not deferentially by application of the 'business judgement' rule".

Judge Tevrizian, who had been nominated by ICANN, dissented on this point saying that a de novo consideration of evidence should not have taken place. Also, he disagreed with the role of international law in the case. Though not decisive in this case, the majority ruled that ICANN was "charged with acting consistently with relevant principles of international law, including the general principles of law recognized as a source of international law", and specifically the principle of good faith. ICANN had denied the import of international legal principles for its work.

The majority also found that ICM Registry had met all the necessary conditions, including "sponsorship criteria" (which relate to the proposal being representative of the industry it purports to represent) and that the decision by the ICANN Board to reconsider their application was a violation of "neutral, objective and fair documented policy."

Forced migration?

This decision which ends a year-long battle that had pitted Internet scholars against each other does not even satisfy all representatives of the adult entertainment industry. A Top Level Domain dedicated exclusively to adult content could be used by some states as a means to force all unwanted or supposedly immoral content to migrate to this TLD which could then be easily monitored or blocked. Professor Goldsmith confirmed this in his expert report: A "website on the .XXX domain is easier for nations to regulate and exclude from computers in their countries because they can block all sites on the .XXX domain with relative ease but have to look at the content, or make guesses based on domain names, to block unwanted pornography on .COM and other top level domains."

Will states use the .xxx domain to create a red light district on the Internet? Milton Mueller, Professor at Syracuse University School of Information Studies and Director of its Telecommunications Network Management Program and another expert witness for ICM Registry alongside Professor Goldsmith, does not think so. In a statement to the Harvard Law Record, he writes that "countries that possess both the political power and the hostility to freedom of expression required to do that are the ones that systematically block online porn anyway (China, the Arab states, Iran, etc). If it meant that the sites were merely segregated in .xxx rather than blocked altogether, it would be a step forward for adult sites. There might be some countries that try to use .xxx as a compulsory red light district, but if that just means that they are blocked the obvious response is for the online adult sites to locate in the U.S. and other more liberal countries".

Similarly, on the "Online Adult Industry News" blog, Stuart Lawley, Chairman of ICM Registry, was quoted as saying that he is "eager to work with ICANN to make dot-xxx a reality, and the time for stalling is long past." (I would have wanted to read on, but accessing the site produced a stream of strange pop-ups of scantily-clad women and my neighbors in the library had started to frown.)

Is there anything to Judge Tevrizian's warning in his dissent that "any disgruntled person" will now be able to "second guess" ICANN. "This is sheer nonsense", Professor Mueller told the Record. "One has to be a lot more than 'disgruntled' to take on the risks, costs and time burdens required by the [process] as it now stands." First, this is a question of money.

According to Mueller ICM Registry spent $ 4-5 million on legal representation. More fundamentally, Mueller believes Judge Tevrizian's warning to be plain wrong: "Couldn't you say the same thing about judicial review of Congress or the Executive Orders of the President? Or lawsuits against corporations by their shareholders? Does Tevrizian think that no corporate board can ever do wrong?" As the financial crisis has demonstrated beyond doubt, corporate boards can do wrong and courts are often right to second-guess them.

Snatching victory from the jaws of ICANN's defeat?

In the end, ICANN's defeat might actually be a win. Professor Mueller wrote in his blog that "the "defeat" for ICANN's past President and Board Chair (and the Bush Administration) is actually a great victory for ICANN as an institution". To the Record, he explained that "ICANN is a new global governance institution. Up to now, people have been deeply worried about its lack of a foundation in law, a problem caused by its global nature and its unilateral creation by the US. The feeling that ICANN has inadequate external accountability mechanisms prevails almost everywhere outside of those on the payroll of ICANN." The new review process, however, will provide ICANN's stakeholders with a greater sense of security and ICANN itself with some guidance. Overruling ICANN was important. "The panel proved beyond a doubt", Mueller said, "that the independent review really is 'independent', and this in turn builds confidence that ICANN's own institutional solutions can develop into the robust accountability mechanisms it needs."

This backbone against future government interference might come in rather handy, as only on February 24, Lawrence E. Strickling '76, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, announced that the US would end its decades-old "hands-off" policy towards the Internet: Without "government involvement", he said in a speech at the The Media Institute, "we will lose the one thing that the Internet must have—not just to thrive, but to survive—the trust of all actors on the Internet."

The panel confirmed ICANN's view on one essential point: The decision is not binding on the ICANN Board. But ICANN is likely to allow .xxx anyhow. After all, the last years saw an internationalization and a liberalization of the Top Level Domain market. These days, ICANN is accepting new propositions for Top Level Domains from cities (think .berlin), regions, and private actors. Apart from meeting certain policy conditions, it's just the small matter of paying around US$100,000 to become the owner of your very own Top Level Domain.

.com celebrates 25th birthday

Kevin Murphy

Mar. 15, 2010

On April 26, 1985, a man called Charles Hornig complained on a mailing list that his new symbolics.com email address wasn't working. Scanning every mail server on the internet, all 1,008 of them, he discovered only one was configured to handle a .com address.

"I am not heartened by these results," he wrote. "Maybe we should go back to .ARPA, which people at least understand?"

Twenty-five years ago today, his company, Symbolics, was the first to register a .com domain name. It was over a month before the second was registered and only three more were registered that year.

Today, there are almost 90 million .coms, with half a million new ones added every week. VeriSign, the .com registry, handles over 50 billion DNS queries every day. It's difficult to imagine an internet without it.

But there very nearly wasn't a .com at all. Draft specs published in May 1984 called for a ".cor", for anything corporate-related. The same draft called for a ".pub". By July, these had morphed into .com and .org, but nobody seems to know why.

Paul Mockapetris, who invented the DNS and is now chairman of Nominum, said he cannot remember whose idea it was to use the string '.com'. There was a lot of debate at the time, he said, with most of it focused on whether to create generic domains like .com or to make them all country-specific such as .uk.

"Back then none of this seemed important," he said. "We set up .com so we could split off commercial issues and have all that dealt with separately. At the time, everybody thought that that was the tail and rest was the dog, but it turned out the reverse was true."

Symbolics, the first .com registrant, also failed to realise the significance of its role in the nascent internet. Russell Noftsker, founder and president of the now-defunct Lisp computer maker, said that most commercial internet users were US government contractors 25 year ago.

"The driving application the funding agencies were interested in was the connectivity of researchers and contractors," Noftsker said. "We thought there would be some commercial applications, but we did not know how broad that would be."

It wasn't until the advent of the web in the early 1990s that domain name registrations, many of them speculative, started to take off in a big way. Early movers such as Gary Kremen, the original registrant of sex.com, went on to make millions from their investments. Even Symbolics.com was sold off last August for an undisclosed sum to a domain investor.

The engineers who created the system were not so fortunate.

"I was smart enough to invent it, but not smart enough to own it," joked Mockapetris. "If someone had asked me, do you think you'll get 10,000 names registered, I would have said, well I hope so."

ICANN, the body now responsible for managing new additions to the DNS, is set to soon open the floodgates for potentially hundreds of new top-level domains, many of which will compete with .com. So is .com's day over?

"I think there could be some dilution, but right now .com is the only international brand," said Mockapetris. Many country-code domains stagnate because local businesses all want a .com, he said. "Until someone figures out how to break that, it's going to stay that way."

ICANN passes resolution to China's IDN ccTLD applications

Mar. 15, 2010

The wrap-up meeting of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) board passed a resolution to China's IDN ccTLD applications, the Chinese delegation to the meeting has told Xinhua.

According to this resolution, ICANN president and CEO has been assigned to draft an Implementation Plan for this urgent issue which has been bothering ICANN for quite some time since the announcement of the approval of the first four IDN ccTLD applications.

Thanks to the progress reached Friday at the Nairobi's conference, China's IDN ccTLD application will be approved as early as April and Chinese Internet users will be able to surf the Internet with native language.

CNNIC, ".China" requestor, welcomes the Board resolution, while encouraging ICANN to take swift action to make ".China" Top Level Domain a reality as soon as possible.

ICANN is the body who is in charge of the coordination and management of the Internet DNS and IP addresses. The IDN (Internationalized Domain Name) ccTLD Fast Track Process was approved by the ICANN Board last year and the first requests were received in 2009.

The Process enables countries and territories to submit requests to ICANN for IDN ccTLDs, representing their respective country or territory names in scripts other than Latin.

Among them, China Internet Network Information Center submitted its IDN ccTLD application, namely ".China" to ICANN.On Friday's meeting, the ICANN board passes the resolution of "Principles for Handling Synchronized IDN ccTLDs for the fast track process", enabling ".China" application be approved soon.

Sources close to this matter disclosed that ICANN aims to approve ".China" as early as April.

There are 384 million Chinese Internet users, one fourth of Global Internet users. Chinese Internet users have long demanded Chinese Domain Names,hoping to be bridged the digital divide set by the language barrier with the successful application of Chinese domain name.

![The EastAfrican](The EastAfrican masthead)

Domain name meeting urges Africa to end Internet Drought

Michael Ouma

Mar. 14, 2010

A global Internet security firm has asked African leaders to make the Internet more accessible and affordable in order to promote social and economic development.

At the 37th session of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) held in Nairobi from March 8-12, industry players noted that the Internet was key to overall GDP growth.

Icann's chief executive, Rod Beckstrom said: "A new drought has emerged in Africa — an Internet access drought. We would like to help African leaders to end it, as online commerce is becoming important around the globe."

Mr Beckstrom singled out Kenya as an example of an African state that has embraced emerging online networks, with its growing fibre optic system and its potential for expansion across the continent.

"Africa's young generation is already embracing the Internet any way it can, and they want more. This can be seen from the fact that 77 per cent of Kenyans want to spend more time online while 63 per cent want more and better access to the Internet," said Mr Beckstrom.

In harmony with its Vision 2030 economic blueprint, the Kenya government intends to increase the sector's contribution to the country's GDP from 3 per cent to over 10 per cent in the next three years.

Mr Beckstrom urged other African nations to end telecoms monopolies which, "increase the price of Internet services, trapping the poor in a technological drought."

He said that despite Africa making up for about 15 per cent of the world's population, the continent accounts for less than 7 per cent of Internet users globally.

Icann, formed in 1998, is a non-profit organisation that was incorporated in the United Sates to keep the Internet secure, stable and interoperable, by promoting competition and developing policies on its unique identifiers.

Icann has representation from all over the world.

Speaking at the meeting, Kenya's Information and Communications Minister Samuel Poghisio said the hosting of Icann in Africa provided industry players and government officials in the developing world, an opportunity to learn, first-hand, the continent's needs and challenges in the ICT sector.

Mr Poghisio said although the number of Internet users in Kenya still stood at about 4.5 million according to the Communications Commission of Kenya, the registry with the ".ke" domain had shown signs of positive growth.

In July 2007 for instance, registered users stood at about 7,000 and a year later, they were 9,486, with the number of domain registrars growing from 77 to 105.

Kenya Network Information Centre (Kenic), which manages the ".ke" domain saw its revenue within the same period grow by 21 per cent, from $168,057 (Ksh12.6 million) to $202,555 (Ksh15.2 million).

"We are currently developing an investment policy with the aim of ensuring Kenic maintains at least a one-year cash reserve within the next three years," said Mr Poghisio.

The CCK director general, Charles Njoroge said at the meeting's opening session that the East African region was in the process of setting up an Internet exchange portal that will ensure local traffic is kept within member countries' borders.

"We are establishing computer emergency response teams. Kenya's will be named KE-CERT," said Mr Njoroge.

KE-CERT is expected to manage cyber security in the country through co-ordinated response to related incidents, awareness creation and provision of advisories among others.

WIRED

Canon First in Line for Its Own Top-Level Domain, .canon

Ryan Single

Mar. 18, 2010

Canon announced Wednesday it intends to be the first company to say goodbye to .com and buy its own top-level domain, taking advantage of ICANN's decision to broadly widen the number of top-level names. If — or rather when — this starts happening, web address conventions may never be the same.

If successful, the global electronics giant, perhaps best know for its digital SLR cameras, will open the .canon global Top Level Domain, or TLD, as soon as late 2011. And then the dot-com revolution, still only 25 years old this week, gets really interesting: Surfers will be able to navigate to "http://canon" to reach its website. Canon employees could create e-mail addresses like "Jim@canon."

"Canon hopes to globally integrate open communication policies that are intuitive and easier to remember compared with existing domain names such as 'canon.com'," the company said in a press release. "Canon has made the official decision to begin necessary procedures to acquire '.canon' upon the introduction of the new system."

Of course, many (but not all) web browsers already resolve the correct site when you type just a company name in the address bar — but this is the search engine working under the hood making its best guess. Typing "Intel" into the address bar of the latest version of Firefox, for example, gets you straight to http://www.intel.com/. Ironically, typing in "Canon" takes you to a Google search page whose top choice was that company, but apparently the page is not strongly enough associated with the word to trigger a "Feeling Lucky" choice.

ICANN hopes that opening up the name space will lead to innovation and allow for more choices for those seeking to register a domain name, given how hard it is to find a name in the dominant .com TLD. For instance, restaurants across the world called Gino's Pizza could be ginospizza.socal, ginospizza.chicago and ginospizza.westvirginia.

ICANN won't finalize the rules for landing your own TLD until at least the middle of 2011. But the draft rules say new gTLDs are only open to corporations or organizations — sorry John.Abell — and the application fee is set at $185,000. Fees can rise from there depending on whether people dispute your claim. If multiple organizations apply for the same name — say for instance .news or .religion — they are urged to work out a deal on their own, else the name could go to the highest bidder in an auction. So, good luck with that, .MiddleEast.

In an interview with Wired.com earlier this year, ICANN CEO Rod Beckstrom said he thought that nearly all of the 100 most popular websites would eventually apply for their own top-level domain.

Companies like Canon will use existing name registrar companies that knows how to handle DNS, and are unlikely to give up their .com addresses anytime soon. But the idea of shortening URLs further will likely appeal to companies like Google and Facebook that provide public profile pages for users (e.g., http://JohnAbell.Facebook, or http://MileyCirus.Google), giving individuals who missed out on the domain land rush of the '90s another crack at intuitively named beachfront internet property.

The idea of opening new domains is hardly without critics, including some who see user confusion over the new names and who point out that e-mail validation scripts will not recognize sergey@google as a real address.

Trademark holders like CocaCola fear they will have to battle domain squatters in hundreds of new domain and argue that "fraud and abuse in the system as it currently exists … will be amplified by the rapid addition of new gTLDs." Coke suggests that brand name TLDs should wait until after more generic names like .restaurant are tried out, while other trademark holders see no reason for the new names at all.

Perhaps even more dangerous are fights over contentious domains like .religion or .muslim, which could land ICANN in deep political fights that it has tried to stay clear of in order to remain being seen as a neutral, standards setting body that only controls the net's naming architecture.

Already, the proposal to establish .XXX has caught ICANN in a political battle. The proposal, which would create a top-level domain for pornographic sites without requiring all such sites to use it, was initially approved by ICANN. But after religious groups in the U.S. protested, the U.S. government threatened to keep .XXX out of the net's root file, which would force a showdown over ICANN's independence. (The Commerce Department approves the root file every day, though that's usually a formality). ICANN then revoked .XXX, only to lose an arbitration proceeding in February, forcing it to reconsider its decision.

The final rules for the first round of applications have not yet been published, but they will likely be quite similar to the current draft. Those rules require a hefty deposit, a thorough vetting of the name and the sponsoring organization and a pubic "Expression of Interest" to let the net community know about the proposal. Trademarks will be taken into account, and given the price, it's unlikely anyone will try to snag .IBM unless they are actually IBM.

But in some ways, the move might not be necessary, since a cool URL isn't as necessary as it used to be. Given that many users use search engines to navigate (typing Yahoo into Google.com's search box, for instance) and that many browsers now let users search on words directly from the address bar, it's increasingly irrelevant whether users remember your URL or not — so long as they remember your company's name. This could get complicated, however, if someone registers .plumber. What will browsers do in the case that someone types "plumber" into their browser's address bar?

States embark on a scramble for cyberspace

Misha Glenny

Mar. 18, 2010

It is time to stop thinking of cyberspace as a new medium or an agglomeration of new media. It is a new continent, rich in resources but in parts most perilous. Until 30 years ago, it had lain undiscovered, unmined and uninhabited.

The first settlers were idealists and pioneers who set out from San José, Boston and Seattle before sending back messages about the exciting virgin lands that awaited humanity in the realm of the net. They were quickly followed by chancers and adventurers who were able to make fortunes by devising their own version of the South Sea Bubble.

It was inevitable that the wondrous materials found all over this territory would attract the interest of nation states. Now, the scramble for cyberspace has begun. Military and intelligence agencies are already staking their claim for the web's high ground as civilian powers lay down boundaries to define what belongs to whom and who is allowed to wander where.

Cyberspace is being nationalised rapidly. In some parts of the world, this has been going on for a while. Russia has been running a programme known by the delightfully sinister acronym Sorm-2 (System of operational investigative activities) since the late 1990s. This ensures that a copy of every single data byte that goes into, out of or around the country ends up in a vast storage vault run by the Federal Security Service. You can read about atrocities committed in Chechnya if you wish but you can be confident that somebody will be looking over your digital shoulder.

China, of course, has its "great firewall", filtering politically incorrect sites along with pornography and other forms of cultural contamination. But of even greater import is China's demand, effectively conceded, that the US relinquish control of the internet's language and domain names through the Californian non-profit organisation Icann. This is being transformed into a United Nations-style regulatory operation. China will soon have absolute say over the internet's structure within its borders.

The legal mapping of cyberspace in the west is more chaotic. But we are now witnessing the establishment of myriad laws and rules by legislators and in the courts. In a hearing this week at Blackfriars Crown Court in London following a major cyber-crime trial, Harendra de Silva QC put his finger on it when he argued that "we are entering a world where almost any human interaction of any kind will require use of the internet".

So while there is clearly a pressing need to define rules that apply in cyberspace, they are emerging at speed with little coherent strategy behind them. Nobody knows where this process will lead for two central reasons. The speed of technological change means that the traditional tools of state used to

carve up the world in the 19th century, such as laws and treaties, are often inadequate if not entirely irrelevant when applied to this new domain.

Law enforcement agencies such as the FBI and the Serious Organised Crime Agency in Britain have invested considerable time and money in bringing down criminal networks on the web. But as the Internet Crime Complaints Center in the US has just reported, the losses from cyber-crime continue to climb at a staggering rate because criminals adapt at lightning speed to new policing methods.

In the commercial world, major legislation concerning copyright, such as Britain's Digital Economy Bill, is unlikely to withstand the second great variable - the coming of age of the net generation. Laws banning file-sharing are likely to prove as unpopular as the poll tax that helped bring down the Thatcher government. They also look utterly unenforceable.

As a harbinger of change, we are seeing political parties springing up throughout Europe with names such as the Internet party or the Pirate party, which understand the web as simply part of human DNA. "In the collision between the old and the new on the web," argues Rex Hughes, a Chatham House fellow who is leading a cyber-security project, "the old always wins the first few rounds but eventually they die off".

But the greatest battle is happening in the area of cyber-warfare and cyber-espionage. Symbolically, the US designated cyberspace as the "Fifth Domain" last June and the first man-made one after land, sea, air and space. Nato lawyers are trying to work out how the laws of war operate in cyberspace. Hysteria is accompanying this new arms race, as when Admiral Mike McConnell, former director of US National Intelligence, claimed at a Senate hearing last month that "if the nation went to war today in a cyber-war, we would lose".

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of "anonymisation", so useful for cybercrime, is a gift to intelligence agencies as they sniff into every corner of the web to find out who is up to what.

None of this would amount to a hill of beans were it not for Mr de Silva's point that everything we do is somehow mediated by the web. Governments are becoming obsessed about the need to control the internet but have yet to work out how to do this without suffocating the noble goal of those pioneers who merely wanted to facilitate communication between ordinary people. Heaven forbid!

BUSINESS DAILY

You get what you negotiate for, not what you deserve

Harry Hare

Mar. 18, 2010

Last week's Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) meeting will go down in history as one of the most successful.

This is despite earlier insecurity concerns, which almost forced the board to move the event to another venue.

The meting past the highest number of resolutions ever, some of them unpopular with sections of stakeholders.

There seems to be a return to reason in the resolutions, a sign that finally the board is stepping back from the rigid and pointless position that "an IDN TLD has to be three characters in length."

The most significant resolution for Kenya and the developing world was the withdrawal of the expression of interest (EoI) for entities interested in applying for new gTLDs.

The EoI was published last December and was one of the substantive agendas at the Nairobi meeting.

The EoI required entities interested in participating in the first round of the new gTLD programme to submit basic information about themselves and the requested top-level domain, also referred to as "string".

The model was a direct result of community recommendations for such an undertaking.

The board directed that a draft model be constructed based on public comment for additional discussion.

A decision on whether and how to proceed with the EoI was to be taken in Nairobi.

According to the board, the withdrawal was due to lack of certainty about the date when the issues would be resolved.

For developing countries, this stage would have been a major barrier to entry given that those interested in participating in the first round were required to put up a deposit of $55,000 out of the total $185,000 evaluation fee.

Short-term reprieve

This is further to a $ 75,000 annual fee.

The withdrawal may be a short-term reprieve though as ICANN staff work on a new model.

Other hot resolutions included the deferring of the .xxx decision to the next meeting which will be held in Brussels.

Supporters of the .xxx initiative have held that the board has been acting in a discriminatory manner, even ignoring its own committee on this resolution.

The board devoted a lot of attention to trademark interests at the expense of market diversity, some said, as most of the resolutions passed refer to various aspects of how to protect trademark owners from the horrifying prospect of letting people register names under new TLDs.

This against the reality of cyber squatting which has seen many companies lose their trademarks and forced to pay hefty prices to cyber squatters to reclaim them.

One thing I learnt at the ICANN meeting is that you will never get what you deserve, only what you negotiate for.

Lobbying and open talks on what the internet should be is all what ICANN is.

Forget Dot Com, Can You Think 'Dot Canon' Instead?

Brad Gilligan

Mar. 19, 2010

Canon announced its intention to be the first to bid farewell to .com and replace it with .canon. For someone so young, I found myself balking at the press release. Say goodbye to .com and the other generic Top Level Domains. (gTLDs?) Those have been the standard for as long as I've been alive!

I knew that ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, had previously decided to open Web addresses to non-Latin characters -- a step that acknowledges the Internet's global use.

I missed the bus on casting aside the gTLDs for branded alternatives.

The process opening gTLDs for broader registration began in 2008 and ICANN is on track for the release of the new system. Behind the policy-setting body is Rod Beckstrom, who is committed to seeking innovation on the Web. Wired quotes Beckstrom as saying: "One of the least innovative spaces in the Internet is the global top-level domains. It's an anomaly. When the Internet opens up, then there is innovation."

I originally thought this would lead to confusion. If I don't know a URL, a good bet is that it will be found at NAME.com. But one of my colleagues reined in my panic by suggesting that companies will retain their old domains. Plus, if this gains popularity in coming years, we'll likely adjust and first try to reach a Web site through its branded domain.

At the earliest, these new domains will appear in 2011, giving me plenty of time to cast off my old-world constructs and embrace a new way to reach my favorite sites.

The EastAfrican

Announcing the birth of the dot.africa generation

Michael Ouma

Mar. 21, 2010

Organisations and individuals operating in Africa will soon have a variety of Internet domain names to pick from, including ".africa."

This follows a decision by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) board to expand the generic top-level domain space from four — ".com," ".org," ".net" and ".biz" — to 21.

DotConnectAfrica, a non-profit organisation will operate the ".africa" top-level domain registry, with help from sponsor organisations and business people.

Sophia Bekele, the executive director of DotConnectAfrica said the project is expected to boost regional integration and benefit the business community.

"Ultimately, we hope that the ".africa" domain will brand Africa and encourage increased participation on the Internet," said Ms Bekele.

Profits from the initiative, which is expected to be operational by next year, will be reinvested in socio-technological advancement projects that will benefit the continent.

"With over 900 million Africans, including stakeholders in government, private sector and NGOs operating in the continent, the potential for economic development is enormous," said Ms Bekele, who is also a former elected advisor to Icann.

Challenges

However, the uptake of the '.africa' domain could prove tricky as a number of people still prefer to use the more generic ".net" and ".com" domains for their online identity.

Kenya's ".ke" domain on the other hand, has registered a paltry 15,000 users to date, due to the high costs involved in acquiring and maintaining top-level domains.

To adress low levels of adoption, DotConnectAfrica is considering having second level names to make it affordable for individuals, charge more for corporations and have an exclusive section for government and related identities.

In another strategy to encourage adoption levels, DotConnectAfrica intends to advertise and promote an African identity by working with respective country codes' top-level domain registries such as ".ke," ".ug" or ".tz."

"We will also work with foreign registrars as we promote '.africa' as a one-stop domain, as we aspire to protect and advance their corporate brands and interests across Africa.

These (foreign) domains should become more visible with owners spending more on regional advertising thereby educating the African public and driving local demand," said Ms Bekele.

The African Union heads of state recently endorsed the ".africa" initiative at the Addis Ababa Assembly that ended on February 2.

The endorsement followed a similar approval at the November 2009 Ministerial Conference in Johannesburg South Africa, where the Council of African ICT ministers acknowledged its benefits to the continent.

The report of experts stated the need to establish the ".africa" domain as a continental top-level domain for use by organisations, businesses and individuals with guidance from African Internet agencies.

Law enforcement lobbies hard for ICANN changes

Mar. 24, 2010

U.S. and U.K. law enforcement officials are trying to marshal support for changes that would make it more difficult for criminals to register domain names under false details.

Their aim is to get the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) -- the overseer of the Internet's addressing system -- to impose stronger rules on registrars for generic top-level domains (gTLDs), such as ".com."

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.K.'s Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) presented recommendations to ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) last fall in Seoul. Each country has a formal representative to the GAC.

Among those recommendations are that ICANN should require its vetted registrars to check that the information used to register domain names isn't obviously fraudulent.

Also, they'd like to see a reformation of proxy services used to mask domain name ownership in the WHOIS database, while still respecting people's right to privacy.

The DNS (Domain Name System) structure now allows for almost complete anonymity, said Paul Hoare, senior manager and head of e-crime operations for SOCA.

ICANN should administer either the proxy registration itself or oversee proxy registration companies so there is an audit process and registrants can, with the right legal documentation, be traced, Hoare said.

Although criminals will still be able to game the system, the changes will help law enforcement, he said.

The proposals are supported by the G8 High Tech Crime Group and Interpol, said Robert Flaim, supervisory special agent with the operational technical branch of the FBI.

Hoare and Flaim asked participants attending the Council of Europe's cybercrime conference this week to contact their GAC representative and advocate supporting the proposals. ICANN is scheduled to hold a meeting in Brussels from June 20 to June 25.

"What we are effectively saying to you here is that there is tangible opportunity to change the landscape of the law enforcement," Hoare said. "We may be able to offer you a tangible reduction in criminal capability within your own jurisdictions."

However, the changes will likely increase the cost of domain names. Domain name registration services are typically low-margin businesses, with more money made through other ways such as privacy registration services.

"It's going to cost money," Flaim said. "Obviously, there's a lot of opposition from the registrars."

ICANN has formed a working group within the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO), which formulates the organization's domain name policy, to evaluate proposals from the FBI and SOCA. The GNSO should issue a report in a few months and eventually vote on the proposal, which would also need approval by ICANN's board of directors.

Internet agency approves domains in native scripts

Anick Jesdunun

Mar. 24, 2010

Four countries and two territories have won preliminary approval to have Internet addresses written entirely in their native scripts as early as this summer.

However, proposals for Internet addresses that would say "China" and "Taiwan" in Chinese will require a few more months of technical review. The delay is not over political disputes, but rather because the Chinese language can be written in two ways — using simplified and traditional scripts. Rules are being developed to make sure that addresses in either script go to the same Web sites.

Since their creation in the 1980s, Internet domain names such as those that end in ".com" have been limited to 37 characters: the 10 numerals, the hyphen and the 26 letters in the Latin alphabet used in English. Technical tricks have been used to allow portions of the Internet address to use other scripts, but until now, the suffix had to use those 37 characters.

With the addition of non-Latin suffixes, Internet users with little or no knowledge of English would no longer have to type Latin characters to access Web pages targeting Chinese, Arabic and other speakers.

In January, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, known as ICANN, paved the way for an entire domain name to appear in Cyrillic for Russia and Arabic for Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Added to the list this week are suffixes in Chinese for Hong Kong; Sinhalese and Tamil for Sri Lanka; Thai for Thailand and Arabic for Qatar, Tunisia and the Palestinian territories.

Hong Kong, a territory of China, didn't have to go through a further review as China and Taiwan did because "Hong Kong" appears the same in both simplified and traditional Chinese.

Cyber crime to top Internet forum agenda

BY VICTOR JUMA

An international conference on the future of the Internet will be officially opened today despite earlier fears of insecurity. The meeting had earlier been threatened by fears of terrorist attacks.

Last month, Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) received an unclassified report from the United States' Department of State related to the Kenyatta International Conference Centre, the venue for the meeting, that said the building was a key target for militants.

According to Doug Brent, chief operating officer at (ICANN), the board resolved to go on with the conference after it was briefed on additional security measures.

"The government and all parties involved have stepped up their security preparations for the event and we are confident that all will go on smoothly,"

> **Cyber security is becoming a serious issue for anyone involved in the ICT industry**

Among other issues, international delegates at the 37th gathering of senior officials of the ICANN meeting will discuss evolution of the Internet, its security and innovations that would create new business opportunities in Kenya and across the globe.

In particular, the meeting is expected to focus on the growing cyber security threat, with the Kenyan members planning to unveil a new security agenda.

"Cyber security is becoming a serious issue for anyone involved in the ICT industry and the Kenyan delegates will be working together on a comprehensive security agenda for the country," Mr Buruchara.

Another important issue that is of concern to industry players is the declining Internet addresses on IPV4 (the current Internet platform).

It is estimated that only 10 per cent of the total Sh4.3 billion addresses on
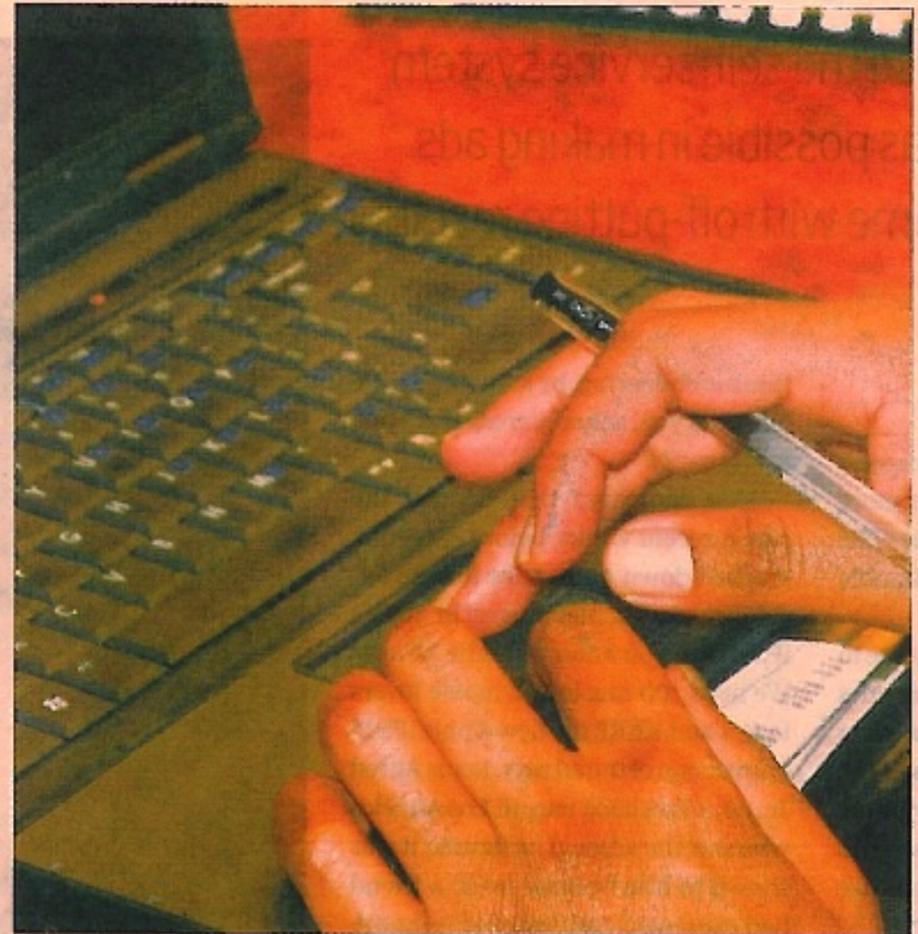
The ICANN meeting will discuss evolution of the Internet, its security and innovations that would create new business opportunities in Kenya. FREDRICK ONYANGO

known as IPV6, which features an almost inexhaustible number of addresses, is implemented soon, new computers or servers will not have the ability to connect to the Internet as they will lack a unique identifying address (a special set of numbers).

While the Internet will continue working after the addresses run out, "what will happen is that no new businesses can start up on the net, at least, without multi-hosting on an existing

looned over the last decade," reads part of an analysis of the situation by InfoQ, an online technology community.

In light of this risk, the Internet Society, an organisation that develops standards, says that network operators and enterprises will need to implement IPV6 in order to ensure long-term network growth and global connectivity.

Though there are ongoing mitigation efforts to ensure maximum use of

Google maps out Kenya on the web

The Government is collaborating with the world's leading search engine to push more local content to the Internet

By **JAMES RATEMO**

The Kenya ICT Board has partnered with *Google* to push more local content to the Internet.

The partnership, which offers the Kenya ICT Board support worth Sh2.4 million, will result in a sharp increase in the size of the online community in the country and see Kenya inch closer to becoming a knowledge and information economy.

Through meetings dubbed *'Tandaa Symposium'*, the collaboration aims to raise awareness on how the Internet can be relevant to Kenyans and encourage development of more local digital content.

The development comes in the wake of a high profile one-week meeting in Nairobi by a global Internet corporation — the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

ICANN, a non-profit public benefit corporation, is holding its global meeting in Nairobi from March 6 to March 12.

A major boost to Kenya's growing ICT sector, the meeting is crucial, as it discusses issues regarding the stability and security of the Internet.

One of the topics slated for discussion is the future of the Internet and the innovations that would create new business opportunities in Kenya and across the globe.

Local content is still sparse online despite the landing of undersea optic cables that has seen connectivity charges drop remarkably.

Kenyans are still being bombarded with foreign content due to lack of compelling local content.

The Tandaa Symposium, sponsored by *Google*, will bring together

INTERNET: Google to absorb more local content

experts, entrepreneurs, business executives and civil society to explore how to produce more local content for consumption via mobile phones, digital TV and the Internet.

According to Kenya ICT Board CEO, Paul Kukubo, these bi-monthly events will showcase successful initiatives that demonstrate the potential of the Internet for economic and social change.

The events will also offer capacity building for business owners, innovators and community groups and show them how to adopt digital technologies and make use of digital content.

PUBLIC ENTHUSIASM

"The Kenya ICT Board and *Google* believe the event will help generate a public enthusiasm for creating, protecting, using, sharing and preserving content through digital technologies," Kukubo says.

"This is in recognition that Kenya's digital future depends on its citizens exploiting the opportunities technology offers."

The first event started on Saturday at the recently launched Innovation Hub located at Bishop Maigua on Ngong Road.

Kukubo says the Government and industry view broadband technologies as critical for national and economic development and can assist communities realise the

ONLINE PRESENCE

- Kenya has partnered with Google to increase Kenya Content on the Internet.
- The partnership includes an estimated Sh2.4 million support to the Kenya ICT Board.
- Global statistics indicate that at least 3.4 million Kenyans use the Internet
- The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a non-profit public benefit corporation, is holding a one-week long global meeting in Nairobi.

benefits of a true information society.

"Research indicates that one substantial obstacle to attaining a critical mass of broadband users is the lack of compelling applications and content at a local level...the development and enhancement of a structured digital content strategy that supports and enables local digital content development is an idea whose time has come," says Kukubo.

Global statistics show that at least 3.4 million Kenyans use the Internet but the worry is whether they are interacting with local content online or they still are heavy consumers of foreign content.

A quick survey of Kenya's presence online is quite encouraging. Already, there is a

plethora of Kenyan content available online.

"Websites from all professions from health to accounting, law to entertainment provide a valuable resource for the millions of Kenyans online. But this is not enough," he says.

"It is already clear that the appetite for local content is resonant and its continued creation in a structured manner is critical for long-term sustainability."

Through *Google*'s support, the Kenya ICT Board will bring together local content developers and IT professionals to explore the opportunities and challenges opportunities in developing local digital content through bi-monthly events dubbed the Tandaa Symposium on Local Digital Content.

PUBLIC INTEREST

"As we embark on our objective of getting Kenya online," argues Kukubo, "the essential requirement of this partnership is to get Kenyans to understand that this is in the public interest and common good."

"Working with *Google*, we aim to look into how communities can use emerging technologies to enables community voice, preserve our culture and bring together all the content that supports them in making informed and wise choices."

Joe Mucheru, Regional Lead for Sub-Saharan Africa,

Google says, "We hope that through this partnership, we can educate Kenyans on the opportunities the Internet offers and that in the end, we will see Kenya producing more local content and competing at a global level."

The ICANN meeting is hosted by the Kenya Network Information Centre (KENIC), which aims to institute a local

non-profit organisation to operate and manage the Internet resources allocation and registration services to assist in the development and growth of Internet in Kenya.

KENIC's manages and operates the delegated domain name space in the interest of the Kenya Internet Community and in respect of the global community interest consis-

tent with ICANN policies.

KENIC, through a partnership with Internet stakeholders, has initiated a number of East Africa Internet Governance Forums.

This stems from the realisation that there is a need to address the limited participation by African stakeholders on global Internet governance debate and process.

INTERVIEW - ICANN urges Africa to break internet monopolies

Tue Mar 9, 2010 2:58pm IST

NAIROBI (Reuters) - African governments should break internet monopolies to help lower the price of access, the body in charge of assigning online addresses said on Tuesday.

Rod Beckstrom, chief executive of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), said while 15 percent of the world's population lives in Africa, Africans made up less than 7 percent of all Internet users.

"We really need the African leaders to shatter monopolies because it is a bitter irony that in Africa there are some of the poorest people in the world paying the some of the highest prices," said Beckstrom.

Many Africa countries score the lowest possible result in a technology ranking by the World Bank due to low incomes, weak regulation, limited competition and lack of private investment.

Beckstrom said the late arrival of key information technologies in Africa was likely to reduce the cost for many countries. "The most positive aspect of Africa putting its technology infrastructure later is that they will get the best technology at a much cheaper price."

Beckstrom, in Kenya to attend the 37th ICANN meeting, also said it was moving to help Africa countries which were more prone to cyber crimes.

"Their systems can be and are often get attacked and we are running a security program with 20 Africa countries to help them reduce cyber crimes," he said.

The World Bank says there are 10 undersea cables either under construction or in the planning stages in Africa, which could push down international bandwidth rates and increase the number of broadband users.

U.S.-based advisory firm AfricaNext Investment Research expects Africa's broadband market to grow to 12.7 million users in five years from 2.7 million in 2007.

Internet set for radical change

Regulator to vote on new domain names to accommodate more languages

By JEVANS NYABIAGE

The board of the international body that assigns internet addresses will this Friday vote on key strategic policies that will drive the future of internet.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, ICANN board meeting in Nairobi is expected to make a decision on whether or not to adopt the new generic Top Level Domains (gTLD).

The gTLD are words at the end of the internet address such as .or, .org, .com that are not associated with any specific country. Under the proposed arrangement, the numbers of the gTLD's would be increased to 21 to include every word in any language.

The current address system does not accept languages such as Arabic scripts and the expansion in languages will make internet more accessible. It will be possible to use characters from, say, Chinese, Arabic and African languages for full internet address, instead of just part of the address.

East African countries needed to expand internet penetration to enhance economic growth, ICANN chief executive officer Rod Beckstrom told the organisation's 37th session in Nairobi on Monday.
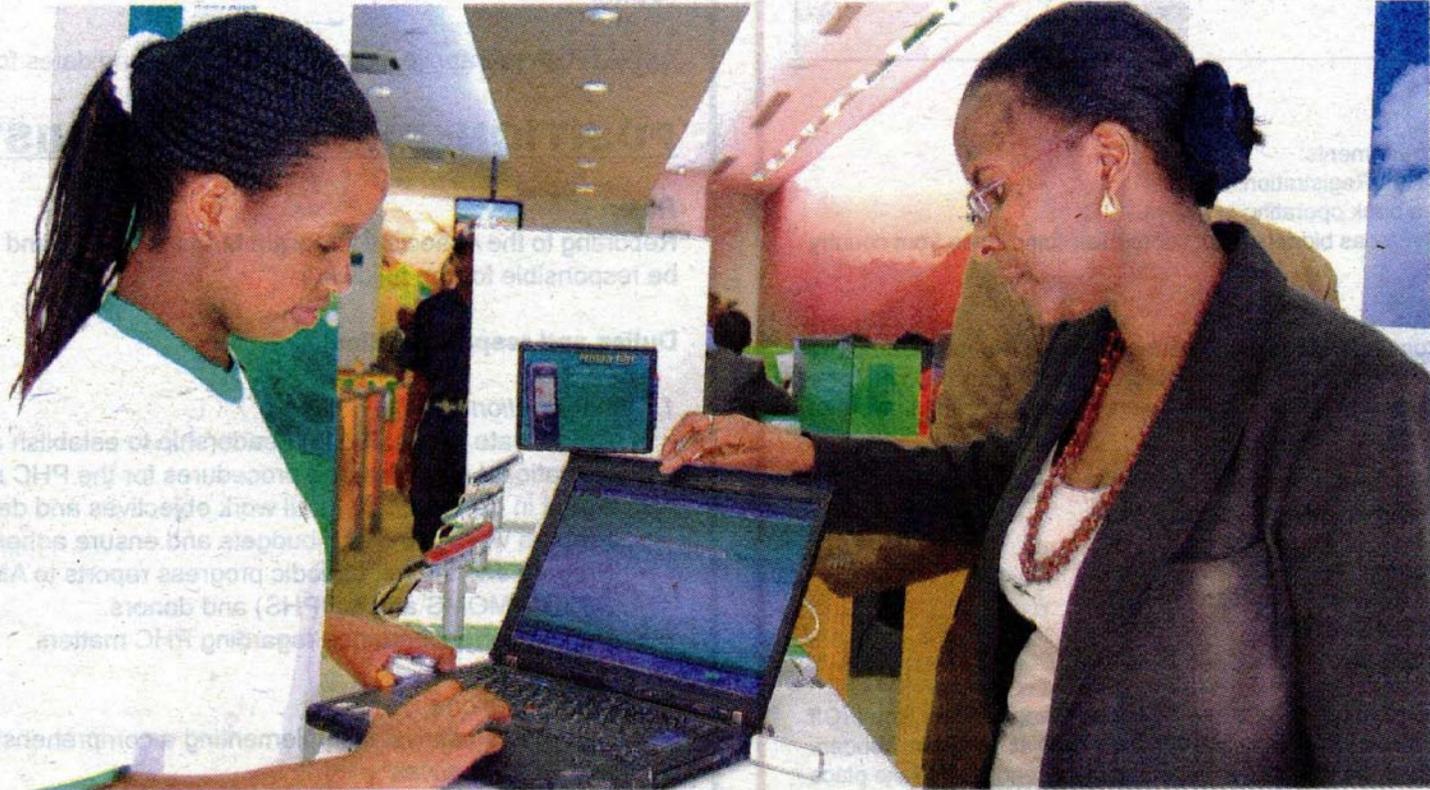
The region boasts two undersea fibre optic cables, Seacom and the East African Marine System (TEAMS) – and a third one, code-named EASSy, expected to land in June – but prices have not come down enough to stimulate a boom.

"I would like to throw down the gauntlet to invite Igad (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) heads of State to join us here and use the internet to help all their people," said Mr Beckstrom.

"It's a small step for them and yet it would be a huge leap forward for the future of their countries."

The Igad, now meeting in Nairobi, is

Use of internet is growing, especially after the landing of two fibre optic cables in East Africa.
PHOTO / File

made up of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. It was created in 1986 to combat the devastating effects of severe East African drought.

"A new drought has emerged in much of the same region," said Mr Beckstrom, "an internet-access drought, compared to other parts of the world."

Africa's young generation is embracing the internet, he said.

According to ICANN figures, 77 per cent of Kenyans want to spend more time online, while 63 per cent crave better access to the internet.

BY KUI KINYANJUI

DIGILIFE

Letter to the brave Nairobi Internet conference delegates

'I hope you now know that our city is not different from other major cities and that just like your own, it has its own highs and lows in the security department'

Dear ICANN delegate, First, on behalf of my fellow country-men, I would like to extend our sincerest welcome to you to our country.

I trust that your week-long stay here will be both productive and restful as you deliberate on the future of the internet at the 37th meeting of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) at Kenyatta International Conference Centre.

Further, I would like to thank you for being brave enough to visit our fair city in the sun.

Your presence means a lot to us, and I'm not just speaking for the many hoteliers who are charging you $500 a night.

The fact that you defied the edicts of your governments, casually casting off their claims that Nairobi is as insecure as Kabul, is a highly commendable act. I trust that as you arrived at our international airport you were reassured to find that it is indeed as big as many other average airports in the world.

As you drove along what we fondly refer to Mombasa Road, I hope that you managed to catch a glimpse of our famous wildlife huddling in what is left of our city's national park.

If you did not, do not be discouraged, it may have been difficult to see through the towering buildings and industrial parks that line the highway.

> Further, I would like to thank you for being brave enough to visit our fair city in the sun

I am sure that while you were caught up in our (in)famous two-hour "jam" stretching from Nyayo National Stadium to the Bunyala roundabout, you had time to appreciate our intrinsically commercial nature as hawkers attempted to sell you everything from imported shower heads to ripe mangoes.

And after you checked into your hotel and probably locked your door, I hope you had time to turn on the television and enjoy our local programming.

Did you catch a glimpse of our politicians on the evening broadcast? Although we are angry at some of them for stealing our hard-earned money, we find them quite entertaining.

Hopefully you even caught a glimpse of our newest political force, it's known as the Placenta Party of Kenya. Anyway, what I do hope is that you did not spend your time cowering in your hotel room every night, anxiously waiting to hear a burst of gun fire outside or worse still, the knock of a gangster on your very door.

It would be really disappointing if you whiled away your evenings locked up in your room, laptop plugged into the high speed connection on the wall. That would be sad because although you are here to discuss the internet and its future, you do need to socialise.

It's my sincere hope that as you pack your bags this Sunday and retrace the route back to the airport, you go easily into the night (or day), having come to the realisation that Nairobi isn't Kabul.

Spread the word to those who would not come here because they were concerned about the city security. I am sure you now know that Nairobi is just like your own city, and has its own highs and lows in the security department.

Yours sincerely, Kui.

Just like other urban areas in the world, Nairobi has its own security challenges. FILE

ICANN Board withdraws EOI

12.03.2010

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has today withdrawn the Expression of interest for proposals for entities interested in applying for new gTLDs. The expression of interest was published last December for public consideration and was one of the substantive agendas in the Nairobi meeting.

The EOI required entities interested in participating in the first round of the new gTLD Program to submit basic information about the participating entity and the requested top-level domain, also referred to as "string". The model was a direct result of community recommendations for such an undertaking. The Board directed that a draft model be constructed based on public comment for additional discussion. A decision on whether and how to proceed with the EOI was to be taken in Nairobi, after considering the public discussion.

According to the Board, the withdrawal was due to lack of certainty about the date when the overarching issues would be resolved to the satisfaction of the Board and the consequential difficulty of synchronizing the launch of the new gTLDs Program with the proposed EOI, and preferring to focus ICANN staff resources on resolving the remaining issues.

Through out the meeting speakers expressed concern on EOI process with some asserting that its complex and time consuming. "We need to move forward with the implementation of the new gTLDs, a process that has already taken too long already," said one delegate who sort anonymity.

Other speakers who were opposed to the EOI complained at the lack of communication and awareness of the EOI process especially in developing counties. According to the EOI, those interested in participating in participating in the first round were required to put up a deposit of US$ 55,000 out of the total US$ 185,000 evaluation fee. Steve DelBianco of NetChoice says, "the EOI was an interesting idea but became a distraction from the work remaining to ensure that new top level domains will minimize online fraud while helping people around the world to access Internet domains using their own language and script."

Bruce Tonkin, one of the Board members said that there was confusion about purpose of EOI which would have otherwise provided data on number and nature of strings. "Would have informed applicants to improve their applications," he said.

DNSSEC Moving Ahead at .Org and ICANN

By [Sean Michael Kerner](#)
March 12, 2010

The march to secure the Internet's core DNS infrastructure with DNSSEC is moving forward.

Since at least the summer of 2008, when security researcher Dan Kaminksy disclosed a critical vulnerability in DNS, the global Internet domain routing ecosystem has been moving to implement DNSSEC, which provides is a digitally signed mechanism to authenticate the integrity of DNS information, secure the system and prevent attacks.

Among the first generic Top Level Domains (gTLD) to first announce its plan to [adopt DNSSEC was .Org back in September 2008](#). This week, .Org announced that its rollout of DNSSEC is now on track for deployment in June 2010. On a global basis, ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) reported that DNSSEC adoption in the root zone of the Internet is also going according to plan.

"We are extremely pleased to witness the gaining momentum in DNSSEC development and adoption, ".Org CEO Alexa Raad told *InternetNews.com*. "All actors within the chain of trust -- registrars, ISPs and application providers -- now have a known lead time for development, and zero uncertainty about the future of DNSSEC."

At the time of the original Kaminsky disclosure on DNS, some questioned [whether DNSSEC was the appropriate remedy](#). That's no longer the case, as all of the major gTLDs, as well as multiple country code TLDs, domain registrars and ISPs are moving to implement the solution.

But that effort has come with costs. In June 2009, Ram Mohan, CTO of Afilias, the technology provider for the .Org registry, told *InternetNews* that the .Org [DNS effort required a multi-million dollar investment](#).

Raad said that service providers can expect to see an uptick in TCP query traffic for the DNSSEC signed zones they serve once they have made the transition.

"We have seen an increase of between 1.5 percent and 2.5 percent," Raad said. "Some country code TLDs have seen increases of less than 1 percent. This is something we will be watching as deployment of signed domains increases."

She added that ISPs will want to test their infrastructure for complete and up-to-date support for UDP .

While .Org is moving forward with its DNSSEC initiatives, ICANN is also reporting progress on ensuring that the root zone of the Internet is secured. During a session on DNSSEC at an ICANN meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, this week, officials offered an update how deployment is going in the root zone of the Internet DNS. Currently the root zone is scheduled to be fully signed for DNSSEC by July 1, 2010.

"This is remarkable development," Steve Crocker, co-chair of ICANN's DNSSEC deployment initiative and chair of the Security and Stability Advisory Committee, said at the Nairobi meeting. "We have one of the most significant parts of the DNSSEC process and, indeed, one of the most significant changes in the Internet under way, and it's proceeding quietly and nicely enough to suggest that the impact will be modest, and we're on our way for a clean launch in July."

Sean Michael Kerner is a senior editor at InternetNews.com, the news service of Internet.com, the network for technology professionals.

The ICANN meeting that almost never was

The country almost lost the oppotunity to host the international conference after threats of a terrorist attack emerged

By MACHARIA KAMAU

Last week Nairobi successfully played host to the Internet community during the 37th Internet Corporation for Assigned Numbers and Names (ICANN), growing Nairobi's profile as a centre for conference tourism.

This was despite initial fears that terrorists had targeted the event's venue, Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC), for an attack.

The United States State Department had issued a warning to ICANN in early February that KICC had been a target for attack by Somalia's insurgent group, *Al-Shabaab*, which almost led to the cancellation of the meeting.

The warning saw ICANN board discuss possibilities of rescheduling the meeting, and even considered looking for alternative venues, which would have dealt a blow to the country, having lost the opportunity to host the Internet community two years ago.

Kenya was supposed to host the meet in 2008, but ICANN withdrew following the post-poll chaos early in the year.

The Kenyan Network Information Centre (Kenic), the local host, said the alert had affected the final preparation plans. Kenic Chairman, Sammy Buruchara, however, said the forum saw minimal cancellations.

"Only two of the ICANN staff out of a total of 65 cancelled their travel to Kenya, and overall only about 100 delegates who had confirmed attendance cancelled," he said.

He added that the organisation had been able to engage local police to provide security and transport for the delegates between the conference centre and their hotels.

ADEQUATE SECURITY

Buruchara, however, did not take kindly the insinuation by Americans, and also ICANN, that Kenic, and therefore Kenya could not provide adequate security to such a high level delegation, despite having played host to other delegates attending various forums in the past.

Delegates at the ICANN conference in Nairobi. The meeting ended successfully, despite initial fears of a terrorist attack [PHOTO: MOSES OMUSULA]