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DURBAN – What the Journalists Think  
Wednesday, July 17, 2013 – 13:30 to 14:45  
ICANN – Durban, South Africa

BRAD WHITE:

Again, my name is Brad White. I am the Director of Global Media affairs for ICANN, which is a very long way of saying I am the point of contact for journalists. So if you are a journalist somewhere on the planet and you're writing about ICANN or internet governance in general I am generally the first place that they stop to try and get the information they want with the right person that they want. We first tried this session in the Toronto, What the Journalists think, because we thought it would be really interesting to hear from the people who cover us and are paid to cover us with a critical eye. Journalists are not necessarily out there to be our friends although most people who work PR and communications want to think that they're actually paid to hold the feet to fire to keep us honest to be critical.

I was a journalist for more than a quarter of century so I have a great admiration for what these people do. I like reporters, I like interacting with reporters and we got such good response in Toronto, when we tried this for the first time that we thought we wanted to do it again at the each of the future sessions but angle it around the region the Global Region that were in so we are going to pursue that today in that regard with three very prominent African journalists who've covered generally the internet governance generally and ICANN specifically. Allow me to introduce the people whom who cannot see the faces of, for remote participants a typically sort of the board meeting room and they have

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the people, the audience off to one side, so we are a little restrained here in terms of view angles.

Rebecca Vanzeku, in the yellow sweater, is one of the most prolific reporters covering ICANN. She is a tech journalist entrepreneur. She has covered Africa's tech stories for the last 10 years. Her stories of covered diverse topics in the ICT Arena, from the (inaudible 00:02:08) implementation. She is currently with IDG, which is a new service; she is the Sub Saharan Africa correspondent. I'm going to after I get through with these introductions of each of these folks give us few words about their news organizations, since not all of you may be familiar with them. Jumping over to the other extreme in the blue Shirt is Reme Nowraky, (inaudible 00:02:34) or was I somewhere close (laughter) Of course we did.

I should say that I interact a great deal with both Reme and Rebecca. They've covered us for quite some time. Reme is a quite renowned author in the ICT arena, internationally acclaimed multiple award winning new media journalist. He has been this senior reporter he is currently with Digital Sense Africa media group. He has previously been a senior reporter with champion newspapers one of Nigeria's leading dailies over 14 years. He's received a total of 15 awards in the last decade for his reporting on ICT issues, business and the economy and in between Rebecca and Reme is Brenda Zulu, Brenda, and I have never met before today, but welcome and we are glad you can participate in the panel. Brenda is a correspondent from (inaudible 00:03:30) Zambia, she has written for IDG new service, Rebecca's news organization and Highway Africa news agencies. Those of you who are unfamiliar with

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Highway Africa's it's a very cool program, which I've had a privilege of speaking at with Rhodes University in Grahamstown South Africa.

It's a very prominent journalism school with it's the largest they do a meeting each year which is the largest gathering journalists on the African continent and it's quite humbling to go to a highway Africa meeting and see where the young African journalists are at in terms of reporting the journalism. It's quite humbling saying that as a former American journalist. Brenda has covered the ITC IT technology sector as a journalist blogger for many years both national and international level. So that said, Reme, let's start with you, if you could just give us very short brief capsules of your respective news organizations that would be greatly appreciated. Reme, can we start with you.

REME:

Thanks Brad, it's a pleasure to be here. Thank you and your team at ICANN. Once again my name is Reme (inaudible 00:04:48) currently I'm the editor of the Digital Sense business news in (inaudible 00:04:55) Nigeria. Just like you said I have participated for over 50 years and currently also within the Digital Sense frame, we also introduce some media outreach program to engage public as well within the issues, concerning the (inaudible 00:05:17) within the Nigerian space as well. So it's glad to be here. Thank you.

BRENDA:

Okay, Africa interactive media is a media organization reporting in French and English, we actually cover events using media tools. So we actually cover science and technology.

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REBECCA: (inaudible 00:05:51) service is American news where that mainly covers technology news and most of the articles that I write in and my other colleagues globally writes appear in computerall.com, CIO.com, CFO and among all the websites like 20 of them all based on various aspects of technology.

BRAD WHITE: Great, thanks very much. The first thing I would like to throw up is what is the greatest challenge that you guys have currently internet governance generally and ICANN specifically. Is it understanding what is largely a technical field, is it getting editors interested in your stories? What's the greatest challenge you face?

BRENDA: Yeah, I remember when I started covering internet governance stories; my editor did not want the stories on the internet governance. He used to tell me Brenda give me my stories which are political stories because in Africa politics actually overrides many, many, stories. So, it was quite difficult he didn't want to publish me until I one time I think we didn't have any content, so he published me and then stories won an award, then he got a little bit interested but he is telling me he needed his political stories.

REBECCA: Well, I think I probably have covered most of the ICANN compared to my colleagues here.

BRAD WHITE:

When did you start covering ICANN Becky?

REBECCA:

In 2004, I think the meeting in Cape Town I think I was with Brenda and I have covered most of them subsequently and one of the most challenging part I have found with ICANN is that the people around ICANN are a bit stuck up; you'll find that they behave more like a club or a secret society. So whenever you want to get any form of news it's not easy to get it. If they don't know you and like know Kieran McCarthy and Kevin Muffy and my other colleagues found myself with ICANN meetings and I think they find it easier covering more of the ICANN staff, because I don't say they are white but mainly because they are from the West. So it's probably easier for the people around ICANN to confide in them and give them more tips on the stories that are coming up and all that kind of stuff.

So, you find that within ICANN itself there is a whole club of first of all they talk in a language that you are new it's hard for you to get. So people will tell you, we know you are (inaudible 00:08:40) and we are discussing who is this and if you don't know you are new journalist then, I remember when you covered it first in 2004, they may have come to Africa, but if you ask me they never left I mean ICANN in terms of the impact to the local media it wasn't exactly felt, because it's like people came with a whole lot of club and talked to their staff and then they left without necessarily the patience sort of get out. So for me I find it, now I don't find it so hard because I have learnt to navigate my way around, but I still get some people who give hints to Grant Gross, Grant Gross is the guy who reports from Washington DC. So people attending an

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ICANN meeting, but they send the tip to Grant Gross and then Grant will then come back to me and say “oh this is the guy who is at the ICANN meeting and he has this tip” and you can follow and all that and so to me those are some of the challenges for covering an ICANN.

BRAD WHITE:

Remy, we’ll get back to you in one second but when I arranged the interview with a CEO with you was that Forty or was that with Backstrom I don’t remember and I don’t remember what the issue was do you remember?. When I arranged for you to do a one-on-one interview by telephone was that with Backstrom was that Forty, I cant remember, which CEO it was.

REBECCA:

That was with Backstrom.

BRAD WHITE:

Had that just out of the curiosity had that happened previous to you where ICANN had reached out to you and said do you want to do a one-on-one interview with somebody I am trying to get a sense of us are things just as bad as they always were, in terms of your ability to reach the people that count is there an improvement where is that at?

REBECCA:

Actually that was the first time and I must say in the last 3 or 4 years that the ICANN’s engagement between you guys out in the west and African journalists, in this case being myself has been improved either because you guys have in the communication department you’ve gone

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out your way to reach out to journalists in my area or generally journalists or you've realized that Africa is a continent that you can't just continue ignoring.

REME:

Okay, when I probably started covering ICANN was I think was at the early stage of the dot com boom, and we had been told what the world would become when (inaudible 00:11:15) entering 2000 and of course at first we became curious, we started fully you know on what's going to happen afterwards. So along the line I then discovered ICANN, because in the process of trying to find out more information and given that the internet is not too (inaudible 00:11:37) then, some of us started digging more and that interest was sustained because every other time technology issues come up in a different way so and by the time we eventually got to I think it was highway we met Kieran there was some enlighten program that was also introduced that also opened another pathway for relationship.

BRAD WHITE:

This was Kieran Baker right? Kieran Baker was my predecessor; he used to be the point person for the journalists some years back.

REME:

Yeah, so that also opened up another pathway, so the interest grew over time but then coming down to an area which, when you asked my colleagues about there are lots of technology based stories or internet based stories in the media houses. Yeah it's true that very often you discover that most editors wouldn't like to go with internet or

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technology stories per say but some of us have proven that there is the possibility of news materials in some of these contents, because what we would do there often is to narrow it down and try to play around it with humor (inaudible 00:13:03) stories to make it assertive both to the readers and to our editors there.

So some of them became interested, especially when we decided to get awards you know. So even at their own end they became curious, this year I think you are not getting award because of that. So over time, most media organizations in Nigeria and I believe that also across Africa started to create a specialized bits for people and that's why you can see some of us being a pioneer in particular bit for a long time (inaudible 00:13:41) 15 thereabout years. So it's gotten over years also because we, we allow to specialize on certain subjects like technology. We have been broadening the knowledge and the (inaudible 00:14:00) aspect of coverage we can devote to a given subject like internet governance, and things like that or eliminate the progress within the ICANN community. So LS is then it has been like that and we continue to grow in interest and what happens to ICANN and even in Africa as well because if you look backward a little, you discover as even in the limited process in terms of investments within the internet industry itself Africa seems to be lacking okay, and we decided on our own that we need to also contribute to this industry in order to make it more attractive for investors both within Africa and foreign investors as well.

So as much as we keep writing about it and our people understand what we are writing about by making or brining down the semantics of technology down to the understanding of common readers it makes this job or reporting of technology very interesting as of date many young



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journalists like to report technology. They don't have a kind of support to pull them through, so what very often they do go to maybe my site, or my blog and get a background information of what they want to write about or even try to call you up on phone and say "please I am working on this story what information can you offer me". You know, so it is good at, this is common, I am happy that this aspect of ICANN is involving, the reason that journalists are also given the opportunity to share their ideas and challenges when it comes to covering of ICANN, but at the same time it is important that we probably escalate the innovation to include creating a specific fellowship to accommodate journalists from developing countries, especially Africa.

Because I believe as much as brining new faces, new people into the mainstream if you have up to 10 journalists coming from various Africa countries that are not (inaudible 00:16:25) countries it would not help, because as we seated here that we need to interact with, some of us who been on this side for a long term alright? Myself I have grown beyond (inaudible 00:16:42) to create a media of my own called Digital Sense Africa. We are almost everywhere. We are online as well as hard copy and as I speak to you I am on the board of the NIRA. NIRA is Nigeria (inaudible 00:16:58) Association okay that actually regulates so how the domain names in Nigeria, is like a junior sister to ICANN in Nigeria. So, for me to I have grown to that level shows that we are making progress in terms of industry recognizing that look media professionals have something to contribute to this industry. Thank you.

BRAD WHITE:

Great, by the way let me just mention again because we have such a funky room setting here, if anybody wants to ask a question move up to one of these chairs with the microphone here we are going to leave this as loose as possible so if you have got a question just come up. We will see you and you're your question, introduce yourself and if you're representing anyone. Rebecca you said something I think that I have heard repeatedly from journalists I don't care where they are from and that is I think you used the word arrogance, if you didn't, I will of technical types in speaking, plain speak, there is such a concern when I link some of our technical people with a journalists to talk to some of our journalist is the criticism that comes back at me constantly is "I didn't understand what the hell they are talking about" because we insist on using acronyms.

I think the analogy always used is, you can speak a little bit of French so you go to Paris and you want to be accurate, so you speak English and you dead on accurate the only problem is no one understood what you are saying. I think that we at ICANN have a lot to learn about communicating to people who don't live in our community. Brenda, let me ask you this, when you and I had a lunch and we are talking about this session, we were prepping for it, you kind of told an interesting, at least I thought it was interesting story about what you have to go through when you pitch your editors on a story. Talk a little bit about that.

BRENDA:

Well, I think for me coming from Africa and writing about the technology is that first my editor sits in New York, so whatever I

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consider to be a story is not necessary a story to my editor. So for instance I will be talking to about the Mohammed about the issues with the registrars and the fact that you are more DNS business in Africa growing and when I picked that story and say no its interesting that ICANN is trying to grow this business in Africa, and this guy doesn't understand why don't you guys just grow it yourselves because for them they woke upon a day and everything was working. The internet was fast, the internet was quick, the DNS business was thriving and it was big, so they don't understand all this concerted business. So I have to first educate this guy or the lady and say "by the way here in Africa these are some of the challenges we face and as a result of that that is why these and that makes news" it could be something about internet exchange points. This guy for the first time I wrote a story about Africa IXPs and my editor just didn't get it. So what is an IXP? So I first have to like explain what is an IXP and why it's.....

BRAD WHITE: You got to educate your editor.

BRENDA: Yes and why it makes news. So, that was the challenge the second part of the question the one you ask about ICANN and people talking in the own lingo and coming up with own language is that if you have been an internet engineer for so long, you probably think that for me to report properly and accurately about your topic I must also be an engineer or at least I must understand and at times that's not always the case somebody will walk in here and will want to write the story about what you are doing but then they are not necessary experts, they have not

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sat in registrar meetings or CCNSO meetings like a whole day to appreciate what you are getting.

So at times going out of your way to explain or to be simpler in your language yes, I understand that as journalists we also need to do such to make sure when it comes I come to interview you, I have some basic knowledge and within ICANN I have realized that the types that are better to interview for me are maybe people who are professors at the university like the first time I interviewed Bill Manning, sometimes back I think 2009.

BRAD WHITE:

You are talking about the people who are members of the community, but professors?

BRENDA:

Yes, professors, who already teaches in their own sense, if you interview somebody I can almost tell who is in their day job, if they are professors at the university or teachers at they teach at the university because the way that interview is conducted is different from probably a business type. Somebody who thinks that you are taking 10 minutes, you are already wasting their time. They will not sit down to, they don't appreciate that it's a story that to benefit them and as much as it benefits you or the community itself, so like that interview with Bill it was very complicated and first you need to understand about the route server and everything else and then you have to do the (inaudible 00:21:56) and so I had a level of understanding but still it was complicated for me, but the way he broke it down and the time he took

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can tell you the person, whose interest is to share information and knowledge and somebody who is just thinking. “The hell I have to go to another meeting can’t you just read or do I have to do the interview and stuff”? And that’s maybe because of people who come here are serious they do business and they do big money business.

So when you waste their 15 minutes maybe it means lots of stuff and lots of money for them and for me who is probably from Africa country and I have never understood I don’t appreciate some of these things at ICANN I probably if you blow me off I probably call back and say “hey, let me go and look for my African types and probably they will appreciate these things better”. So which sort of encourages that but I am not sure I am answering your question but. (laughter)

BRAD WHITE:

No, you are answering my question well, and Michelle, I saw you had a question let me just ask Brenda one thing when you cover different tech sectors I assume that you know the problem we are talking about understandability, trade terms, acronyms that’s everything, I am curious how the internet sector varies from other tech sectors that you might cover is it worse or better?

REBECCA:

I think what has helped all of us here is that before we started reporting on ICTs who are taken to class, (inaudible 00:23:24) we were at Rhodes University all of us and each year we had an opportunity to meet people from ICANN and from different technology sectors. So we took this as interest where became interest in the subjects we are being prepared to

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report on the world submit internet society as a team from Africa because at that time there was no one who was reporting on technology issues. So it has been a learning process for all of us. (inaudible 00:24:00) We went to Switzerland and Tunisia. So, for journalists one start reporting on tech issues they should have an interest I think they need to have an interest, yeah and then they should read a lot about the subject and then develop interests because what we are doing now is actually innovating from whatever we learnt we learnt. We are no longer the same journalists like we are no longer ordinary journalists, we are innovators, we have innovated from whatever little bit we picked from here and there, yeah.

BRAD WHITE:

And you are also specialized journalist I mean I can say from personal experience that for me and my job, it's somewhat nice to talk with trade reporters, it's nice to talk with Rebecca. A. She knows the cast and character she knows the subject, if I call up Reme, I know that he has got a certain foundation, painful for me is a daily news reporter and they are generally from much bigger outlets from the Wall Street Journal or the New York Times, what we noticed much more broadly but I can spend 2 hours on the phone just bringing up them to speed on an issue that these guys inherently have, so if anyone appreciates what you're saying I do. Michelle.

MICHELLE:

It was very interesting hearing what you said when you first came to ICANN that there was a high barrier for you to get in and the people, the words you used were stuck up and that was you are from Africa. When

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I first came to ICANN I had worked in the press for over 30 years, my pictures had been published magazines worldwide with a mixture of acronyms and the complexity of it, I also had a very high vary of entry and it was really difficult. On the first day I got here I wanted to do a portrait of the CEO and it was like the last day the last 5 minutes when I actually going through numerous amount of people to actually to get to that hurdle as a graphic reporter to actually just get one portrait and I think right or wrongly ICANN is an organization where you almost have to prove yourself and I mean you know really you have proved yourself but I think we should be bringing in more and more new journalists you know the more people the better we can spread the news about ICANN and what better way to do with journalism and I thank you if you comments Rebecca. Thank you.

REME:

Okay let me just add to what she said, due to the program we already had having on internet governance in Nigeria actually with support of ICANN and though we look forward to (inaudible 00:57: 05) no support. Younger journalists how they look interest in writing about internet governance which boils down to ICANN shortages and things like that and often they have confessed, that the first time that they are hearing about ICANN was from that forum, (inaudible 00:27:28) internet governance for development the host on (inaudible 00:27:33) to realize that there are people or there are people, who are following us who needs to be brought and we should do that every humility and also I appreciate the efforts our team have made so far because last time I spoke to you about engaging communities within the communication sector in ICANN in the DNS industry, we spoke about it and I didn't

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know you are going to take as far as this. so I really appreciate this especially now dot com and I believe ICANN should do everything possible to sustain it and also to make it very encouraging to engage young governance not necessarily younger ones, any other journalists that should have interest come n board because that's another way for encouraging them.

If you have a journalist come in especially from developing countries, though (inaudible 00:28:39) I have been in industry where people who are covering technology don't own laptops, they still depend on PCs in the offices they still depends on the internet on the offices. So if you are going to develop this strategy further, it will be good to also find the way as finding the press room because people who come and they have no access to individual laptops, so they will not depend on the system on ground to develop their stories and send it home. Some of us have suffered that in the past but you do stories and send it home for them to use it you need to come back from the trip and explain word to word what it means for analytical to approve the story. Okay, so that already is because they have started to see changes in our lives and the way we carry ourselves and the way we do the job and (inaudible 00:29:49) people are writing about and also realizing that we must to always come down to the level of ordinary Nigerians and ordinary Africans. We don't allow the dignity that we see in the conferences, constituencies, semantics to overwhelm us because if you are able to bring it down to ordinary people understanding that is only when they can peak more interest in what we are writing about, most of us are one because we are able to demystify technology to understand of our own people and



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help them to gain more interest in what technology is all about. Thank you.

BRAD WHITE: Rebecca, go on.

REBECCA: Sorry I just wanted to add what Brenda was saying regarding the difference between other sectors in ICT itself I think within the ICANN different groups they're sort of resigned to fate, that that either journalists want to cover them or journalists don't understand some of these topics and therefore we never write accurate stories. So, they don't take an extra step and reach out to the journalist. The third thing is that some of them do not even have much of the communication training on how to engage especially the Africans those are the once I have engaged and at times, you may even be having a random conversation with somebody on the corridor and say "Hi, yeah how are you doing" and then they tell you something that makes news then you ask "So, why exactly you didn't even tell about it?. They say "yeah yeah I didn't know that that makes news" but maybe they (inaudible 31:30) say you have to come to find it, but how would they know you don't go out of your way to share this kind of information.

So you find that there are two kinds of people you find that within ICANN there are more developed and more savvy kind of groups that come within ICANN and therefore they know something new or something an issue, within their specific constituency they think that journalists, should be writing about then they will go out and maybe

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reach out to the journalist they are dealing with or ask around, how can I get to these particular journalist, then you find that probably they are more, there are Africans who probably not even appreciate that fact and therefore we will not come out and give you the tip and that's what you find in another sectors you find that science writing general science is its not well reported I am sure global scientist will complain that their sector is not well covered in such cases when you go and meet to the scientist and you tell them that you want to write something in that sector they will probably sit down with you and take time to explain this is the reason why it's important and this is the reason why probably public should know and all that and probably will take offence when you ask elementary questions and all that so maybe people have just resigned to fate that either we don't know oh maybe they are thus who know don't get to the media itself.

BRAD WHITE:

One thing I am curious about what is now we're in Wednesday right? We are Wednesday, now three days into the ICANN meeting based on this meeting that occurred so far what is there a big story for your respective readerships come out of this meeting, I mean what is the biggest story, or is there one?

REME:

The big story so far for me is the strategic present strategic committee, which is very interesting.

BRAD WHITE:

These are the committees that Fadi announced in the meeting.

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REME: yes, they are very interested because one, it showed that ICANN is opening up and they are interested to listen and secondly an African is on top of it. So that also gives credence that Africans can also climb to the highest mountain and (inaudible 00:33:55) there is up in the dream, bringing it down to our own self. If you look at this from movies angle it gives you hope that whatever you are looking for or you desire you can always get it but you have to be patient about it if you look at the history of the people who brought in there or they (inaudible 00:34:16) the strategy they didn't just start today, they were patient and they followed the system and then tried also to learn to advance themselves learning or knowledge is a continuing thing. Thank you.

BRAD WHITE: Brenda. let me ask you a question ICANN meetings, we sort of take for grant for example that people if they are not here they are going to able to access or remote participation access remotely this session for example Brenda you talked about Kevin Murphy, which I am sure most people know from domain.insightide.com, Kevin has not come here because of the expense, which has to be scheduled one thing and other but he is following it remotely. Is that work for your guys if you are unable to attend an ICANN meeting, did you for example cover the Beijing meeting, or not care I mean where you are covering remotely or no interest?

REME: ok, I do follow remotely when I am unable to attend ICANN meetings but truth is that I can't agree all the journalists know about the processes. In fact I think it was in San Francisco or some other meetings

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are before there I had to register in one of the non-commercialized group that I happened to develop interest, in, (inaudible 00:35:42) some of us are aware of all the meetings. Me like had to ask questions or even listen to what (inaudible 00:35:49) discussing there is no direct link to us down in Africa. So I raised, it was a very strong discussion and afterwards they recognized us, so every time there is need for remote meeting I have heard remote discussion participating panels. So I have started to realize and I realized I am taking advantage of that but I am not sure how all us aware of that because only what you know you can take advantage of.

BRENDA:

I like for instance, I came in from yesterday from Monday I tried to assess but I couldn't the internet was very, very slow but then maybe my advice to ICANN is that maybe you want to come up with a directory of sources like you know if somebody is speaking even if you want to access remotely how do you contact that person in terms of...

BRAD WHITE:

Like an online (inaudible 00:37:00) sort of thing, is that what you mean?

BRENDA:

Yes, yeah, like addresses emails where the person can be reached so that you can send an email or questionnaire, press query for you to ask the relevant questions that one wants because sometimes access is like up and down.

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**BRAD WHITE:** Sure and I might add for the record if we in communications can ever assist you, that's precisely what we do is that journalists will often hear somebody in a session and want us to bird dog them, so that they can get a telephone interview with him.

**MICHELLE:** You had one other question? Oh no, she was just illuminating her light. One thing I am curious about its said in journalism that there is no such thing because of the internet is local journalism anymore and in other words everything you do can be seen everywhere in the world. Is that a factor is that something you are conscious when of you are dealing your pieces when you are reporting and writing your pieces.

**BRENDA:** I think that for ICT sometimes, the new journalists don't know who to interview that don't even know where to start from so that could help brand ICANN yeah and then also if for instance there is a journalists who wants to know more about ICTs we are going to have peer-to-peer mentoring sessions if the journalist is in Zambia for instance, that journalist can be paired to me or any other one who is specialized in ICTs because in this field, I think sometimes you need them mentor for as we had classes we didn't have anyone to look to yeah, so I think mentoring sessions are important for journalists who wants to report on this specialized field. Yeah.

**BRAD WHITE:** One thing you have already touched I think interesting is you all talked about both having mentors having people who have cover other

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journalists who have covered the internet governance world or ICANN and either reaching out to them or having journalists who have not covered the arena reach out to you. When I was a journalist reporters would never think of contacting a competitor to get the information because the response would be “What the hell out of your mind you are my competition I am not going to help you” and yet you have sort of said you are willing to do that. I am interested in that difference.

BRENDA:

I think what helped with us is that we created blogs and the blogs did the branding for us. So the people when they read the blogs they think ah these are the specialists they want to ask you questions about statistics and all that because previously there was no content on ICTs in Africa. So we are the content creators as a journalist we have created this content in Africa and sometimes the content lacks other things you know some people will ask you about statistics and all of that when you don't really have so sometimes you have to help to just give them maybe an email address to ask an appropriate organization or person on whatever question they are asking because this happens on online interactions questions a lot.

BRAD WHITE:

Becky, I wanted to ask you a question we are talking about pitching your editor on a piece and how you have to educate the editor to make them see the news value. As you write more stories about ICANN and about the internet, and the internet governance world does that create desire for more stories in other words there is a greater understanding in the part of respective readerships I assume, I assume there is a greater

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understanding on the part of your editor. So do the stories you write lead to greater demand for more stories or do you have to reinvent the wheel each time?

BRENDA:

Well the stories that the best thing when you work for a specialized NEWS, where I do with IDGs at times when you educate the editor, the education is not that much and because ICANN globally is also written about within the IDG network then it's probably easier for me like now whenever the ICANN meeting is somewhere in Africa then it's easier for me to pitch stories and it becomes easier. The thing is that ICANN is not easiest of places to cover like if you wanted to go to the consecutive ICANN meetings, it would probably be very hard to every time get a new angle and new story. That's why you see whenever there is an probably an impending major announcements and that way you find many journalists coming and if there is nothing much happening within this ICANN meeting so the journalists probably keep away and all that.

So for me it creates that interests for more stories because it is easier for me to pitch, and the if its new angle that one was written about probably do not write about it this time but it definitely creates that desire for more news and previously I used think that most as much as IDGs are more specialized news I thought most of the journalists they understood what ICANN does and they would probably be reporting about it until the registrar (inaudible 00:42:18) agreement and announcement that was made I think a year ago, and I wrote about it and it was out of an ICANN meeting and created a lot of bass within the US not even within Africa. I was writing it, because I think it's an

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interview I requested and then it came up as a story and within the registrars in the US it created a lot of buzz and a lot of interest, and the editor came back and said: hey by the way can you do a follow up to this, because people ask looking for more information” and all that, so there are questions you are asking for the stories being more global. I have realized that asked for me to and that’s because my audience is mainly out there. There are people who probably want to invest in Africa tech and they are looking more at information that would help them make some of these decisions, so you will find that the interests, keeps on not necessarily for ICANN stories when I write out they are the interests from international coming local becomes even more and more.

BRAD WHITE:

Lets take the case, and I will get right to Michelle. Let’s take the case with the Backstrom interview that you did, when I reached out to you and said you know would you like to do this interview we didn’t go to Grant Gross, your correspondent in the US. Would you angle that story different than Grant would of, I mean you are basically at that point doing one-on-one interview with the ICANN CEO, are you approaching that interview from the idea that your news organization is going to blast this around the global or you still taking a regional perspective when you approach an interview like that?

BRENDA:

Well for me when I am looking at an angle I look at it in different ways, I mean I’m sorry to tell you Rod didn’t understand much of Africa and probably could care less so there is no way I would have looked at it from an African angle so I had to look for more of a global and more



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something that is international something that he was more comfortable with. So you see if I need to write something and angle it, something that is more for my region and if somebody who understands and appreciate some of those, some of the things that we go through in and some of the challenges that we have to face so in that case I looked at it from more of a global perspective and because I have also realized that within the IDG network I probably know much more about ICANN than some many of my other colleagues, so it means that I take more of a global angle and it will still work for me. So it depends if I interview somebody who understands much about Africa then I will probably take African angle. If I interview somebody who probably doesn't understand much then I take global angle but in cases we have the choice of two I would probably go more for the global one, because it is more appealing for more people.

REME:

Okay, what I wanted to add to that is the issue of global audience that over time also what I have discovered in us online is that most of our readers actually coming from Europe okay and these are people who assess our news materials online. Okay, so we are having that in mind don't just localize stories for the stories sake; you localize it in a way that you will also appeal to the global audience as well.

BRAD WHITE:

So in the other words, in your writing you want to appeal to the local audience we don't want to lose your international audience.

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REME: Yeah, yeah, you have to make sure that you (inaudible 00:45:45) you are not too discerning but at the same time you are not raising bar too much for ordinary people within your community or within your own environment knowing the kind of challenges you have in Africa to understand where you are taking them in the story line, so we kind of try always to meet up with the balance.

BRAD WHITE: Michelle you have a question?

MICHELLE: I think with reference to the meeting strategy working group one of the things ICANN realizes Brad realizes and press realizes that one of the barrier for entry is the financial amount you have to invest trouble to travel to other parts of the world outside of the Africa when there is conferences etc., and I firmly believe that ICANN could maybe sponsor people from developing countries good journalists because you know Rebecca and other journalists here are becoming specialists in their field and it's really sad to lose that continuity because the more ICANN conferences you attend the more you know the subject and the better source of knowledge you are around the world for ICANN.

BRAD WHITE: One thing that ICANN is doing we have a fellowship program where we try to bring people into the community familiarize them with the community and we are making a concerted effort now to make sure that journalists from around the region are part of that fellowship, that

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was the case some years back sort of fallen by the way side we want to renew that. This gentleman had a question I believe?

GIDEON ROB:

Good afternoon, it's good to be here and see all of the people who give us the news and my question I am Gideon Rob from dot connect Africa and probably don't create a buzz and most of the I want to ask maybe if we think most of the report about the Africa news I know I talk to people and I will talk from the point of Arid, do you think most of the journalism is about maybe the new the new gTLD and that is almost the only story that is covered about maybe ICANN in that and there is no other issues that would have Africa and another thing is is there a balance in this reportage maybe the new gTLDs and Africa they are facts maybe and balance and proper asking of questions from all over and all the stakeholders, so that the report comes out because I talk to people and they tell me most of the time the news maybe one-sided. Thank you very much.

REME:

okay, let me respond to you, thank you for that question. The truth of the matter is that new journalists that would like to do a story that is not balanced. Okay, if you take for the new gTLD you spoke about some of the us did stories on it and usually we will make sure our stories are balance, myself particularly and I am sure that applies to my colleagues as well, but at the same time it is important that in the preparation yeah, for your story that you get all views covered, but unfortunately some people we leave story and start attacking individuals okay, which doesn't take us anywhere and even if you look at the contents also if

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one is criticizing an organization for doing something or taking a step you are criticizing the organization because you hate the organization. You want something to be done the right way, the right way that you would think would benefit a larger audience especially a giving society and when it happens everyone will be smiling away okay, so if you find a story that you think that is not balanced, thank God in the media we have the right of response. You can respond to that you can do your response to that and I will show you that any standard media organization will definitely kindly carry a response. It happened to me when I was still working for IDG, there was a story that came up and I did the story we got a petition from US and then I brought my facts, I brought my facts to the table. So, despite his own side of the story, he was saying that we didn't get his own side of the story, I reviewed him. I still relayed it, but also the fact remained there, it was very glaring for everybody to see who was actually at fault. So, it's important that every side of the story is covered okay but at the same time people should also realize that journalists are trying to protect the industry as well. There is nobody who calls himself journalists that wouldn't be interested in growing industry alright. Thank you.

BRENDA:

yeah, I want to comment on that I remember is it Sofia, yeah she sent it a press release where she was saying this story that has been written by Rebecca, blah, blah, blah, you see when you sent a press release like that to the journalists and Rebecca is my friend, yeah there is no way I am going to write to upload such a story on the web because the next day it will be me you know. So when I receive a press release like that I send it to Rebecca and ask her what is happening. So I think even is it

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civil society or registry organizations I think they need to learn about how the media operates, because sometimes as media we feel that we are just being used like a rubber stamp, yeah to destroy ourselves.

BRAD WHITE:

Would it something I have heard of the better 40 years that I have been involved with journalist, we used to have the same work so you had a question.

ADAM LEVIN:

Thank you so very Brad. My name is Adam Levin, I am from the internet society of South Africa. I consider myself as the part of the ICANN alumni, since I am from South Africa, I am entitled to come and visit even though, I am a retiree from ICANN family. You know I dedicated many years of my life as a volunteer to contribute towards the global policy and I am very happy that now ICANN is fully functional and I can focus more on the work at hand, rather than thinking about and talking about the work at hand, so as a leader in the society I completely conquer with my colleagues as journalists I think that we play a very important role in balancing democracies in Africa this is the huge challenge, as the whole society organization I try and participate in governance with local or national governance and it's often very difficult to the African countries because of the power that resides with politician. So we perform a very important role and I relate to the journalist it is very difficult to be able to as a journalist towards a civil society organization to criticize the local government, especially in Africa that isn't very much welcomed as much as it is in more mature types of the democracies.

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One of the things that I found in my experience in ICANN was where there are global media companies and journalists that come from global media companies they are more empowered to be able to criticize the national governance and their roles and the roles that they play in global internet governance than they are national. Of course one could as a national journalist criticize and write articles about other countries region but that is also not really what they are being paid for doing, they are being paid by local organizations so they are not being paid to write about other countries. So it really makes it quite difficult, I think is important for ICANN as such to breed people will understand how ICANN works. There was a reporter by the name of Andrea Cunningham, that followed the ICANN circle in the early days and through attending many ICANN meetings and through being a Reuters journalists managed to cover things to a depth that isn't spoken about in the meetings because we all know with experience it's what's not spoken about in the formal meetings and what's spoken in the corridors that really is determined by ICANN and only with time and international journalists that are aware independent of ICANN. ICANN can't do because it has to be completely neutral, but journalists that are ensuring global governance and operating at a global level are ones that can truly get to the depth and be able to train and mentor local journalists at the ICANN meeting. Sorry, it's just a comment and it's not a personal opinion. Thank you very much.

BRAD WHITE:

Reme, did you want to respond we are going to have to wrap this up, so we will wrap this up after you respond.

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REME:

I remember, thank you very much for that input. One of the things I was able to raise with Brad overtime and even yesterday we had lunch was the issue of having a sort of network that will could also help in creating more education for our colleagues who are journalists and also encouraging the wish that Brenda has also reiterated on. So it is encouraging from you about that, so I really appreciate that we also thought of that and we hope that ICANN can have a welfare giving support beyond we have seen that now so by next time even if it means taking some of these people outside the continent, you can take person from this side of the continent, two from other sides of the continent to see what is happening. How people are also reporting the technology especially ICANN itself. Thank you.

BRAD WHITE:

We've got to wrap this session up, I want to thank you, all three of you. I think this has been Michelle can you engage them afterwards, because we have to vacate the room. I want to thank all three of you Reme, Brenda, Rebecca, you guys travelled here quite a ways to take part in this, as well as to cover the meeting, we appreciate, I always think it's good to hear from people who are outside looking and I think that's always of worth of a great perspective, and you guys afford us that. So again, thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT