**Candidate Statement GNSO Chair**

**October 2017**

**Candidate: Heather Forrest (IPC – Asia/Pacific)**

**Country of Residence: Australia**

Dear GNSO participant, GNSO Council and support staff colleagues,

**ACCEPTANCE OF NOMINATION**

I am honoured to accept the nomination to serve as GNSO Council Chair from the ICANN Annual General Meeting 2017 to Annual General Meeting 2018.

**TERM LIMITATION**

The year ahead will be my final year of service on the GNSO Council, having served a first two-year term representing the Intellectual Property Constituency from AGM 2014-2016, and having been re-elected to a second term from AGM 2016-2018.

**SOI**

I confirm that my Statement of Interest is current and contains all relevant information regarding my employment and any matters that could affect my participation: https://community.icann.org/display/gnsosoi/Heather+Forrest+SOI. I receive no compensation to attend ICANN meetings or participate in PDPs or other ICANN-related activities. I gratefully accept the travel support provided by ICANN organisation to funded travellers, and will continue to do so in the final year of my Council service.

**THE GNSO COUNCIL LEADERSHIP TEAM**

It has been a rewarding experience serving as Vice Chair for the Non-Contracted Parties House and a member of the GNSO Council leadership team led by James Bladel. As Chair, James has made significant efforts to transform the role of the Chair and Vice Chairs to instil a fully collaborative, teamwork environment with shared responsibility, oversight and information-sharing. James, Donna and I have worked closely together over the past two years, and I feel far better equipped now to understand the role and responsibilities of Chair than before I served as Vice Chair. I thank James and Donna very sincerely for the positive working environment they have fostered, and for the special opportunity that I have had to learn from them.

I believe that this teamwork mentality has contributed significantly to Council's efficacy and ability to keep up with a challenging workload that has included not only numerous Policy Development Process (PDP) Working Groups, Implementation Review Teams (IRTs), Cross-Community Working Groups (CCWGs) and other initiatives, but also the milestone of IANA stewardship transition. In my view it is important to preserve and deepen this tradition of having a GNSO Council leadership team; if I am elected Chair, I will make cementing this tradition a top priority. To facilitate this, I believe that we as a Council should develop a clearer understanding of the role and responsibilities of the leadership team, be able to communicate those effectively to other parts of the ICANN community and the ICANN organisation. I note that James, Donna and I have experienced some degree of resistance to our requests to permit the GNSO to be represented by all three members of the leadership team at community leadership functions, and I suggest that we as a Council consider how

we can strategically address this going forward. I believe that this is very much worth our time and effort; having a cohesive, collaborative leadership team will help the GNSO engage with other parts of the ICANN community more effectively, and will help to bring us together as a community.

**OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY THE GNSO STRATEGIC WORKING SESSION 2018**

We have a new opportunity in 2018, having been granted funding by ICANN to hold a strategic planning session at the start of the year. In my view, this is an opportunity to openly and collaboratively discuss some of the more complex or contentious issues that are simply not well suited to twenty minute blocks of time in a standard GNSO Council agenda. Below are timely and important matters that I believe we could discuss with a view to identifying not only areas of common understanding, but areas of difference. My role as Chair would be to help draw out these areas of agreement, while ensuring that differences (which are inevitable in our diverse community) are identified in constructive, collegial, productive ways.

- Role of GNSO Council leadership: clarifying what the leadership team does and exploring how that can become more transparent and accountable to the Council and broader GNSO community
- Role of GNSO Council liaisons to PDPs, IRTs and other SOs/ACs: developing a common framework to improve transparency, accountability and efficacy of these roles
- Role of GNSO Representative to the Empowered Community: developing a better understanding of what this role entails and how the GNSO instructs the Council Chair in filling this role
- Remit of the GNSO Council in light of the post-IANA stewardship transition ICANN Bylaws: including a comprehensive review of the proposed changes to the Bylaws and GNSO Operating Procedures and identification of any distinctions to be made between the remit of the GNSO Council and that of the GNSO
- Communication as a tool to increase efficacy of PDP Working Groups, IRTs and other work efforts and improve broader community participation in and support for these: how can we improve our own understanding of the current status of the sizeable Projects List and Action Items List, and improve the understanding of other SOs and ACs of our remit, activities and their current status?

By developing a better understanding of our own roles and remit as a Council and clarifying our approach for interacting with and informing other SOs and ACs, I hope that we can take steps towards addressing the challenges that face the GNSO Council and broader GNSO community in this time of extremely high work load and change arising from new Bylaws. Further, I believe that many of the above matters lie at the heart of misunderstandings within the broader ICANN community as to what the GNSO and GNSO Council do. Having a better understanding of our own role in the community and our responsibilities under the Bylaws will put us in a better position to inform and collaborate with the GAC, Board, and others. For example, questions have been raised in public forums during the first two public meetings this year as to the scope and decision making processes of GNSO Policy Development Processes. To field these questions and concerns, we could benefit from a better understanding of our own documents and fundamental concepts such as the "picket fence", and explore how to communicate these complex concepts more clearly to a global community, including newcomers.

**THE YEAR AHEAD: HOW CAN COUNCIL SUPPORT WORK IN PROGRESS?**

We currently have four PDPs at the Working Group phase:

- Next-Generation gTLD Registration Directory Services (RDS) to Replace WHOIS
- Curative Rights Protections for IGO/INGOs
- New gTLD Subsequent Procedures
- Review of all Rights Protection Mechanisms in all gTLDs

While the Curative Rights PDP is on track to wind up the Working Group phase in the coming months, the other three Working Groups have significant work plans ahead to build on their existing achievements and milestones.

In addition, the GNSO currently (as at October 2017) participates in four Cross-Community Working Groups:

- New gTLD Auction Proceeds
- Enhancing ICANN Accountability (WS2)
- Use of Country and Territory Names as TLDs
- Internet Governance

GNSO involvement in the latter two will change in the coming months, as the CCWG on Use of Country and Territory Names winds up following the approval of the ccNSO and GNSO Councils for this to occur, and the GNSO Council's motion of 24 August seeking a re-envisioned structure for the CCWG on Internet Governance. Auction Proceeds and WS2 will continue to draw heavily on GNSO community resources in the year ahead.

I propose that we seize the opportunity presented by the strategic session in early 2018 to consider whether and how Council can help the GNSO community to contribute effectively to all of these efforts. I plan to put forward ideas for achieving more effective communication – both within the GNSO community and outside to the wider ICANN community and newcomers/prospective participants – of the current status of our many work efforts. As a specific example, the GNSO Council's response to the GAC Communiqué has been recently acknowledged by various Board members as being a useful tool in the Board's deliberations. Council's informal approach to developing this document, with multiple volunteer drafters, has posed certain challenges. This is an area where clearer process can lead to immediate improvement in our output. Further, our deliberations about the content of this document suggests that we may have different views as to its function. The response to the Communiqué is an important tool in our outward communication strategy, and I welcome the opportunity to facilitate discussion as to how we can improve its effectiveness.

Similarly, the sheer volume of entries on the Projects List (which currently includes the PDPs and CCWGs listed above, plus nine PDPs and other initiatives in implementation phase, and several other non-PDP or CCWG initiatives) suggests that all Councillors could benefit from a review of our communications strategy and how we use our own and staff's resources to provide regular updates of *decisions taken, obstacles faced and resource requirements*. I believe we will be better served in terms of transparency, accountability and efficacy by building on recent developments (such as the recently launched PDP newsletters and more streamlined GNSO Working Sessions at public meetings) to circulate information specifically targeted to helping the Council fulfil its role as manager of GNSO policy development.

**IN CLOSING**

It is clear that the GNSO has much to do in the year ahead. My aim as Chair would be to explore how the GNSO Council can continue to support the GNSO community and interact collaboratively and effectively with the Board and other SOs and ACs. I believe that we already have an effective Council that does not have fundamental problems to "fix"; our role in facilitating the IANA stewardship transition is ample evidence of this. Yet we are an integral part of a highly dynamic community, and it behoves us to acknowledge that dynamism and continuously reflect on how we best fulfil our mission as the GNSO Council and GNSO community.

My leadership style is driven by cooperation and consensus building, not mandates. All actions taken within the Council leadership team of which I have been a part for the past two years have been jointly discussed and agreed. I intend to continue and cement this approach as a standard operating practice.

My "day job" is as a university academic, teaching Media Law, Corporations Law and Intellectual Property Law. I was so fascinated by the policy development that resulted in the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook that I decided to pursue a doctoral thesis in international law on questions that went unanswered and assumptions that had been made. In the process, I discovered that engaging in the ICANN community is a fascinating, invigorating, and yes – often exhausting – challenge. I have learned so much, and I consider the potential opportunity to lead the GNSO Council in 2018 an amazing opportunity to learn from the new leadership team, fellow Councillors, and other members of the ICANN community.

In closing, I am humbled by my nomination and thank the GNSO community for expressing faith in my abilities to lead the Council through challenging times. I can only promise to do my very best to meet your (very appropriately!) high expectations should you elect me in November.

-Heather Ann Forrest