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ICANN Transcription

IDNs EPDP

Thursday, 05 January 2023 at 13:00 UTC

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DEVAN REED: Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. Welcome to the IDNs EPDP call taking place on Thursday, 5th of January 2022 at 13:00 UTC.

In the interest of time, there will be no roll call, attendance will be taken in the Zoom Room. We do have apologies from Maxim Alzoba.

All members and participants will be promoted to panelists for today's call. Members and participants, when using the chat, please select everyone in order for everyone to see the chat and so it is captured in the recording. Observers will remain as an attendee and will have view only chat access.

Statements of Interest must be kept up to date. If anyone has any updates to share, please raise your hand or speak up now. If you

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need assistance updating your statements of interest, please email the GNSO Secretariat.

All documentation and information can be found on the IDNs EPDP wiki space. Recordings will be posted shortly after the end of the call. Please remember to state your name before speaking for the transcript.

As a reminder, those who take part in the ICANN multi stakeholder process are to comply with the expected standards of behavior. Thank you, and over to our chair, Donna Austin, to begin.

DONNA AUSTIN: Welcome everybody to today's call, and welcome to the new year. It's a little bit scary to think we're already five days in. So this call, we will continue our discussion of the risk assessment on the string similarity review. So we had some good conversation about this about two weeks ago, I think it was now. And we recognized at the time that what we were doing wasn't easy to do. And I think the conversation that we had illustrated that there are a number of ways you can think about this risk assessment and the string similarity review.

And just a reminder that what we're trying to do here is not going to be exact, it's not math, unfortunately. So there's no answer. But it is very much a subjective test. And we all think about these things differently. So let's just keep in mind that that is the case, there's no right or wrong answer here.

All we're trying to do is use the risk assessment as a tool to help us think about the string similarity review process and whether the hybrid model that I would say this group is strongly leaning towards is the best path forward given that we have had advice, I guess you can say, from ICANN Org, and I use that term very loosely, I wouldn't give it a capital A advice, from ICANN Org, that the hybrid model will introduce complexity and also cost into the evaluation process for any applicants have IDNs and their variants.

So all we're trying to do is to use the risk assessment as a tool to say whether that added complexity and cost is actually necessary. And when we think about that, it's really, is the added cost and complexity necessary as opposed to what the outcome would be, which would be [for option?]

Because I think the other option available to us that the group has discussed is option two, and coupled with the objection processes. So let's just keep in mind, we accepted this is very, very much subjective. But we're just having a stab really at risk assessment on whether the hybrid model is the most appropriate path forward for this group anyway, and to have a recommendation within the initial report, and develop some texts around that as to why we think the hybrid model is the most appropriate path forward.

So we didn't complete the conversation. Ariel still had quite a few slides, maybe a few slides to get through. So I think what we'll do—Ariel can give us an overview or recap of where we got to on our last call. And then we'll finish up the slides, and we'll see where we come back to. But I guess my overriding guidance here is, this isn't exact. This is just a tool to help us work through

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whether we think that the hybrid model is the most appropriate path forward, or whether we should be leaning towards something that is perhaps less onerous.

And I'm also reminded that when we talk about complexity and cost, ICANN Org didn't give us any color around that. They just said that the hybrid model would involve more complexity and cost. And you might recall that a couple of weeks prior to the call, Pitinan and Sarmad went through an exercise of 20 strings from 2012 round, if they had variants, what would the complexity look like? And the complexity really is tied up in that additional numbers involved in the evaluation process. So that's where the complexity comes in. So we did see that some of those numbers could be quite significant. So that's the complexity that we're talking about.

So if there's no questions before we get started, I will hand this over to Ariel. And we'll continue the discussion on the risk assessment. And I'm sorry that it's been two weeks between [inaudible], but it is what it is. So over to you, Ariel.

ARIEL LIANG: Thanks, Donna. Happy New Year, everybody. It doesn't feel like a new year, because we're continuing the old business from last year. But hopefully this year, we'll see some major milestones completed and make 2023 successful. And that's my personal wish.

So I think this slide is basically a recycle of the slide we showed two weeks ago. And from my personal view, I'm hoping the team

can actually take the exercise and then try to use the model that we introduced last week and assign some numbers and see where the risk levels are for the two risks that we're assessing. And then I'm also going to probably just shout out some numbers from my personal experience with misleading domains, and then maybe to set an example, and then hopefully, the group can take the leap of faith and try to assign some numbers based on your professional judgment and see where we are in terms of the two risks.

So I understand the slides have been shown two weeks ago, and we had a holiday. So I'm happy to do a very quick recap, just to remind folks in terms of the model and the numbers that we designated to indicate the level of likelihood and severity so you have that in the back of your mind when we are doing the exercise.

So I'm not going to kind of repeat what Donna said in terms of why we're doing the risk assessment is, in general, basically to understand whether the level of risk is commensurate with the hybrid model for the string similarity review the team is currently recommending. But in addition to the hybrid model, we have a second option, is basically level two for string similarity review, and then string confusion objection using the hybrid model. So hopefully, this option is also a good alternative, but we need to assess that.

And the risks we're assessing is basically two levels of risk. One is the inherent risk, basically the natural level of risk without doing anything to reduce the likelihood or mitigate the severity. And then another level of risk is the residual risk, the amount of risks that

remains after the inherent risks have been reduced by mitigation measures.

So when you look at the matrix, you will see where those two risks may come into play there. And then, as a quick reminder, the two risks we're assessing is denial of service, no connection, and then the other one is misconnection.

So this is the steps for applying the risk assessment model. Step one is we need to describe the risks and consequences. And step two is to assess the likelihood and severity. Step three is assess the control effectiveness of the mitigation measures. So control effectiveness is basically a fancy way of saying the effectiveness of mitigation measures, basically how effective it is to mitigate the risks.

And then the last step is we will have matrix for risk rating. And then we need to pinpoint where the inherent risk is and where the residual risk is. And in the last slide, I think I forgot to mention the equation on the right next to step four, so inherent risk is likelihood multiplied by severity. And then for the residual risk is inherent risk divided by control effectiveness. So that's the equation and we can actually use that to do some simple math. But, of course, it's not scientific, it's still very much subjective.

So that's a reminder for the model. And so now, this slide is a recap of step one, is our description of the risks. I don't want to repeat the risk description for two risks, because we have seen this multiple times. So one is about the no connection, the other is about misconnection, and I trust the team already understand what they mean.

And then in terms of consequences, we've also seen these bullet points in different meetings already. So for the risk one, no connection, it's mainly a nuisance, but it shouldn't result in serious harm, because there's no website that exists that could cause harm, it's just a no connection issue and kind of annoys the user. But no serious harm has arisen.

And then for risks two, the misconnection, the consequences we list here basically says it could be more problematic than no connection, because even legitimate sites, and if it's a wrong site, can result in credential compromise and accidental exposure of information, and it may even be maliciously leveraged as a DNS abuse vector. So definitely, the consequences for misconnection can be more severe than the no connection. I think I will keep going, because this is something we already kind of saw in multiple meetings.

And in terms of step two, I just want to make it a little clearer, we need to assess two things, one is likelihood and the other severity. 2A is assessed likelihood. So these are the numbers and levels that we include in the rating, one is minimum and then five is maximum, and then two, three, four in between.

What we describe is that for a misleading domain name, minimum means it never occurs and then maximum is that it occurs in a regular and widespread manner. And we try to explain this description by providing examples to showcase frequency and scale that match the description. So if you say likelihood is minimal, meanings in terms of frequency, a user almost never a gets misled by domain names, and then scale is no user get

misled by domain names and such incidents are rarely found anywhere in the world. So that's one extreme.

And then the other end of extreme for maximum, to explain what that means in terms of frequency is that a user gets misled by domain names constantly and the incidences repeat regularly. So it's basically part of your daily life that you get a misleading domain name. And then in terms of scale is that users all around the world get misled by domain names and the incidences are ubiquitous. So it's a everywhere, almost everybody that's using the Internet could encounter such incidences.

So that's where we try to describe or explain the likelihood rating. And then, so basically, we're hoping the team can actually tried to assign some numbers. So if you look at the risk, one, no connection, what likelihood rating would you put there? And then in terms of misconnection, what likelihood rating would you assign?

And maybe I can start just based on my personal experience, and that hopefully, the group can react to what I would say here, and maybe have a different opinion of that based on your personal experience, and also your professional understanding of the situation.

So for no connection is basically the user type a web address, and it doesn't exist, or the user receive an email, and it contains a link, but the link goes nowhere. So I just reflected my past months or past couple of weeks of Internet use, this probably happened to me once last month, because I received email for package tracking, and I clicked the email, the link is broken. And I think it's

probably some typo the email sender included. So it didn't result in a web address. And I didn't really had experienced type, a web address that goes nowhere, because usually in my browser, I just type a keyword and try to find a web address in that way. I didn't really have to type the full domain name in order to find something. So it only happened to me maybe once last month.

And if I have to assign the likelihood, I probably will put a two there for the no connection risk in this case. So that's my personal rating for this one. But I'm happy to hear what other people think. And then in terms of the second risk, the misconnection, the likelihood is definitely higher, based on my personal experience, because I have been receiving spam emails and phone calls and messages on a daily basis, sometimes multiple times a day, especially for text message, and I received some text messages that include a link asking me to renew, for example, my Amazon membership or Netflix account information, then take a look at the domain name, I know it's a phishing kind of link, it doesn't contain Amazon or Netflix, but then you see the top level or second level or something, it's something very different from the official like, and definitely enticing to click, but luckily, I already know it's something not legitimate. So I didn't click. But I understand they're trying to leverage those kind of string confusion or some kind of confusion by user for malicious purpose.

So, for likelihood, I would assign three or even four for misconnection in this case. That's my kind of personal rating for this and I'm just hoping to kick off the discussion by giving you some numbers. But I know that folks definitely have different

views and opinions on this, and I'm happy to stop here. And I see Dennis has his hand up.

DENNIS TAN TANAKA: Thank you. Happy New Year 2023. So thank you for this, Ariel, I think you just helped me in my thought process, and what you just described illustrates the problem that I had in my mind to come up with a number as you are prompting us to select one or determine the level of likelihood for each of these risks.

And the way you illustrate your example is by using your own experience, so the universe of users is Ariel, your web user experience, and that's how you come up with a number of likelihood.

And so here's, I think, in my mind, that's the key factor, how do we think about what's the universe of users that we're talking about here? If we talk in aggregate, of all users of the Internet, we probably will [inaudible] in terms of denial of service or not connection in the four and five, that this occurs every day, it's widespread and we can potentially back it up with all the nonexistent domaining traffic that exists on name servers, all the queries that go to nowhere, because of typos or domain names that are published, advertised, but they are not ready to go live, a number of factors and also automated systems, right, just creating and pinging, sending DNS queries to nonexistent domain names anyway.

So, that's my problem here. How do we think about—if I think of, as your example of Ariel, your experience, and I put my pin on it, I

would say for me, no connection never happens, or very minimal that it happens. But how do we think about what's the universe as we talk about?

So I don't have an answer, but just trying to share my thought process here and my rationale and the conflicts that I have in my mind to come up with the best way for us to look at this problem and come up with an agreement of whether this is the right ratings that we're looking for, or do we need to think of something else? So I'll stop there. I see Satish waiting there. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: So just before we go to Satish, Dennis, in response to your observation, I think it's important for us to recognize that we've been working on this topic—not string similarity review, but we've been discussing IDN variants in this PDP for the last 12 months. So when you talk about the universe of users, what we're really trying to get to here is what do we think? So we're not going to the broader universe of Internet users, but Ariel put forward her personal views. And in my mind, I think that's as far as we can go with this. This is our personal views based on our understanding of the work that we've done on this topic so far.

So in terms of denial of service and no connection, and misconnection, from Dennis Tan's perspective, where do you think that assessment of likelihood would sit? And then Satish has his ideas and maybe Hadia, Nigel, and that's our universe, right? It's the PDP team. That's the universe we're talking about, because we can't go any broader than that. But it's the universe of the PDP team, based on the information we have before us and the

conversations, the many conversations we've had on this topic over a long period of time. That's universe. So what we're looking for here is what's your personal—even if it's a gut sense, it doesn't really matter because what we've said, this isn't science, this is very subjective. So based on Dennis Tan's understanding of the problem that we're investigating here, what do you think is the likelihood? So that's kind of how I'd like to frame this and think about this. So we don't have to go to the global ICANN community universe, let's just think about it initially within our PDP team, that's the universe that we're dealing with. And let's see how it stacks up when we do this as an individual exercise to see where the likelihood ranking falls, if that makes sense. So Satish.

SATISH BABU: Oh, thanks, Donna. So first of all, thanks to Ariel for giving us a very personal experience of this. And it has helped me to kind of position this, and what we're trying to do. And I'm fine with the variation within this group, because the group is diverse. And I expect that there will be some amount of variation, but we are a group formed for this purpose. So at that part, I'm okay with.

The second point is regarding the difference between encountering something and falling into the trap, for instance, misconnection, we are much more careful. So we may get phishing mails, but we don't fall into the trap. So I'm not sure whether we are supposed to count be encounters, or when we actually kind of get misdirected.

Whenever I type a URL from my keyboard, maybe for instance, looking at an image and seeing a URL there and typing, I make

typos very frequently, maybe even once a day. So my personal experience is quite different. But ultimately, my question is, we're talking about IDN variants, but we are being forced to judge on the basis of an Internet where there are no IDN variants and we are actually extrapolating from this space, into the future space of IDN variants. So, if that's the case, then I'm not sure whether what we're trying to do is accurate. But if we are having a fairly broad anticipation from this exercise, which means we are not going to expect very precise results, then I'm fine going ahead in this fashion. Thank you very much.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks,   Satish. We're certainly not expecting precise results here. And it really is what's your best sense, given the discussions we've had so far? And the key here is about denial of service or misconnection, because they were the risks identified by the small team. So I guess we're trying to take that one step further and say, "Well, yes, they are risks, but what's the likelihood of that eventuality? And it is tricky, because we're using this to try to solve a problem of whether the hybrid model and the potential for added complexity and costs associated with the valuation are really valid, and it's necessary to go through that additional process for blocked variants. I checked as part of the string similarity review or whether just the option two, which is the allocatable variants and the potential that the objection process is also there as a backup if somebody has a concern about a blocked, whether that will hold water.

So this is tricky, because it hasn't been done before. This risk assessment is only intended to be used as a tool to try to help us

appreciate whether denial of service is—if everybody thinks that denial of service would be in the range of five, then I think where we would end up is that yes, absolutely, the hybrid model is necessary. But if people landing on just one, then maybe not. And also, we're looking at likelihood now, but there's a second part to this on the axis, which is, I think, severity. So what's the consequence if that risk does eventuate? So we need to go through that part as well. Michael, go ahead.

MICHAEL BAULAND: Thanks. I'm wondering, as I wrote in the chat, are we assessing the likelihood for the situation as it is right now with no variants existing on the top level? Or are we assessing here the potential likelihood that if variants do exist, what would then be the likelihood of those problems? Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: Michael, that's a good question. I guess from my perspective, I was thinking about it more along the lines of in the future. So when variants are in play. But again, if we can also think about the context, is really in the evaluation process that we're trying to work this through. So whether—it's hard to explain this, but what's the difference between the option two for string similarity review and the hybrid model?

The main difference is that in the string similarity review process, that blocked variants would also be reviewed. And the other thing that we understand as well is that it will be a visual review, it's not going to go through some algorithm, it's actually going to be a

visual review by people with, we would assume, the expertise to conduct that string similarity review.

So is it necessary to have those string similarity review cover off the blocked variants, because we are concerned that the risk of misconnection is going to be significant, or the consequence of misconnection will be quite severe? So like everything in this PDP, it's complicated. So there's no singular way to think about this. It's not necessarily about future variants, but it's about the string similarity review process and where those—and I guess what we're trying to come into thinking about here, is those blocked variants.

So I don't know if that's helped anybody, and maybe Ariel has a different view on this or even Steve, they've probably done more thinking about this than me. But we're trying to use this risk assessment as a tool to assess whether—break it down whether we need string similarity review to cover blocked variants because of our concern of the likelihood of misconnection and the severity is going to be considerable. So therefore, we need to be conservative in the approach we have for string similarity review. Sarmad.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you, Donna. I was just going to add that this kind of assessment could actually vary based on the pairwise comparison we're doing between scripts. So there are certain scripts which are much more confusable which is some scripts which are not. Examples could be Cyrillic and Latin, which are very confusable or Devanagari and Gurmukhi, which are very confusable. But, for

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example, Chinese and Arabic may not be confusable. So the level may actually, or could vary based on the pair of scripts which is being considered. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: Sarmad, to the point you just made, are you saying that with a string similarity review process, that different scripts may be more complex to review than others?

SARMAD HUSSAIN: No, slightly different. What I'm saying is that there are certain scripts which are much more confusable to each other than some others. And in those cases, maybe there is a need to take a deeper look, versus, for the others, it may not be needed. So, what I'm trying to say, for example, is that a single scale may not work across all pairs of scripts which are being compared or strings which are being compared, it could actually be dependent on the scripts themselves. So, for example, scripts which are much closer in similarity, maybe the risk is higher, and therefore, a deeper look is warranted. But where similarity is very low between two scripts, maybe the risk is lower, and therefore, one could look at it at a lower level. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: So what would that mean, that we could potentially have a recommendation that says, for these scripts, the hybrid model in string similarity should be applied, and for others, we go with option two? I mean, I think that's what you're saying.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Right. So I think what I'm trying to say is that, yes, there could be like a middle ground that we don't have to do hybrid model for everything. But we don't have to do level two for everything, either. The string similarity review panel, for example, could devise some mechanism to see what works best. And I was talking about it from the context of our risk assessment that it's not—I guess the scale is useful, but it may not be same across all cases. I guess that's what I'm trying to get at. There may be some, I guess, variation based on the strings which are being compared and the scripts they come from. Thank you.

DONNA AUSTIN: I think I understand what you're saying, Sarmad, and that goes back a little bit to the information we received from ICANN org to say that the evaluation for string similarity review, evaluation for the hybrid model is going to be more complex and costly, than the other options. But if it was possible for the ICANN Org information to break down what they see as the complexity, maybe that will help us there. Well, it would certainly help us try to come up with a policy recommendation here if we had more meat around what ICANN is saying would be the added complexity.

And it seems to me that what you're saying is, depending on the script, that could be a determining factor in what adds complexity to the string similarity review. And I'm sorry, I'm not keeping up with the chat. So if there's something that I've missed—And Edmon, I know that you've put a couple of things in chat, but if you're in a position to speak to those, that would be helpful. I

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haven't been able to read it. But I've just noticed that you had made some comments.

EDMON CHUNG.   Thank you, Donna. I'm happy to add a little bit, again, as personal capacity at this time. So I think, a couple things, I think what Sarmad says is probably worth thinking through a little bit, whether this group can make recommendations as a framework rather than a definitive, always use this or always use that and allow a kind of spectrum for the implementation. Because from what Sarmad said, and part of the discussion, it seems to me that it is possible to envision a situation whereby certain different scripts might be approached slightly differently.

But as I guess what Justine just mentioned, is perhaps we might want to get a slight sense of what criteria might be to add into this risk assessment framework. And together, the package can then become a recommendation that has some flexibility for implementation so that we don't run up the bill unnecessarily, but still provide the right amount of protection that the whole variant and string similarity and confusability is intended to offer.

And, again, another point that I tried to make is that we might want to start off a little bit more conservative and relax over time. And again, our recommendations, it might be possible to craft recommendations that include that, and therefore allow some flexibility in the implementation, such that the balance that we're talking about is a bit more dynamic than having us kind of dictate or really specify in strict details. Hopefully, that's understood.

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DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Edmon. I think to me, that's a sensible and pragmatic approach that I think with this, just this exercise of doing the risk assessment, some of the things that it's—I guess the information that we're getting out of this isn't perhaps what we intended, but it is helpful in that we're identifying that the scripts aren't apples to apples, it's apples to oranges, or apples to pears, or whatever kind of other fruit you want, which is reason why we may have a policy recommendation that does allow that flexibility in implementation so that the implementation is able to tailor in some way what the string similarity evaluation would look like for certain scripts. And so we don't have, I guess, all the information available to us now, because variants haven't been introduced before. So, it does make sense that we start off conservative but let's not be hard and fast on it. Let's, through the implementation process, allow for some flexibility to make sure that it's implemented consistent with our thinking without having the recommendation be a hard and fast must. Does that kind of gel with people?

So I think Nigel, can the hybrid model have flexibility on different types of scripts, i.e., differentiate depending on script type? I'm not sure I completely understand what you're saying. But the sense I'm getting from Sarmad's intervention, and Edmon's, is that scripts should be considered differently, because some scripts don't have the same similarity issues as others. So the evaluation could be simpler.

So if we can factor into the evaluation process, the ability for the string similarity review panel to differentiate the evaluation process based on the script and what the problem is in front of them, I

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think that seems to be what I'm hearing, or at least what I'm taking away from this conversation. And I've also got another chat going on with the leadership team. So if there's any part of that that people want to bring into the conversation, that'd be helpful. So Ariel, where are we? Did you want to continue through the deck?

ARIEL LIANG:

So just listening to the conversation, I'm not sure whether we have to do the rest of the risk assessment, because it does seem the group is sort of converging on an idea in terms of string similarity, is basically, level two is the minimum. So basically, all the allocatable variants plus the primary need to be compared against each other. But hybrid model is possible, or optional, depends on the script, depends on the judgment by the string similarity review panel. And then even though this group may not be able to specify specific criteria that mandates that the hybrid model must be used, but at least we can probably include some kind of implementation guidance to include that possibility or things to consider when the hybrid model must be used. But the specifics can be worked out in the implementation. So that's what I'm getting.

And then I also heard hesitation from the group in terms of doing the risk assessment, it's very much subjective, and it may be hard to do. But maybe we don't need to do the risk assessment to develop that kind of recommendation to provide flexibility in terms of implementation. So I'm just wondering, do we want to keep going with the risk assessment or the group want to hash out the recommendation a bit further? So in that way, we know how to draft the language. So I just want to ask this now.

DONNA AUSTIN: So what's the sense of the group here? I think going through this risk assessment exercise has been helpful because it's drawn out some really good discussion and highlighted some of the—I'm going to say novel ways that we can think about the string similarity review and the fact that we do have the ability, as Ariel said, to provide implementation guidance on how the review should be done. So I agree with Ariel. I don't know that there's any real value in continuing through the risk assessment exercise, but that doesn't mean the risk assessment exercise has been a waste of time. I actually think it's been quite valuable in drawing out some of the information and conversation we've had.

So how do folks feel? So where we were on string similarity before we settled on this risk assessment was that the group was really leaning towards the hybrid model. And where I think we are now is that for from a conservative perspective, and on the basis that variants have not been used before, or there's not been the ability for applicants to apply for variants before, that we still think that conservative is the appropriate way to go with recommendation.

But within that recommendation, we identify that the hybrid model may well be appropriate for some scripts, but not necessarily for others. And we can try to put examples into that. We can do that within the body of the rationale, but also, as Ariel said, with the implementation guidance, we can layer that so that we can give a little bit more detail about how we think implementation could be considered. So does that seem to be a way that we can take this forward? So that's the first question. So do we think that's where we are? Some tick marks or cross marks would be helpful.

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Okay, so it looks like folks are comfortable with that approach, which is great, because this has been the big elephant in the room, I suppose, for us, is trying to reach some resolution on the string similarity review. So. Okay, thanks, Michael, that explains why I didn't see any checkmarks, is because we can't do it in this room.

So based on the conversation we've had, we'll go away and do some drafting and bring that back to the group and see if we can get sign off on that. The second question I was going to ask, and this is perhaps more for Ariel, Steve and Emily, but there's a number of charter questions that we put aside until we solve the string similarity review question. And I'm just wondering whether we can now go ahead and look at those charter questions again, and whether the framing that we're talking about here is going to be problematic for those charter questions. It might be too soon to ask that question. But that's something we need to think about as well. I honestly can't remember what those charter questions are. I need to get my head out of break mode. So that would be the only hesitation I had, but I think the discussion we've had today and in previous weeks, I think we're getting to a good place on the string similarity review.

ARIEL LIANG: And Donna, would you like me to respond to your questions and other related?

DONNA AUSTIN: Yes, please.

ARIEL LIANG: So I also need to do some thinking about this, see whether the current recommendation is going to be enough for us to address the related questions. But I can remind folks of what are the related questions remaining. So I think there are three.

One is the consequence of a string similarity review. So basically, it's the treatment of the string that's rejected as a result of a string similarity review, whether the allocatable variants of those strings can still remain allocatable or they will be disallowed. So that's one follow-up question we need to address. And I haven't got a clear answer in my mind how that could be addressed based on what recommendation we have now for string similarity review, but this is something the group can discuss.

The second related question is about string contention resolution. So basically, whether string contention resolution mechanism needs to be adjusted due to the implementation of variant labels. So my thinking is that this could be addressed maybe relatively easily, because basically when string has variants, and then if it has contention with another string, they probably, the entire set of variants needs to be placed in the contention set. Maybe that's the recommendation the group needs to discuss. And that's it. Maybe there's some more to it. But we need to address the string contention resolution-related question.

And then the third question is string confusion objection. Are we still good with going with hybrid model, whether that needs to be changed? I think we just need to confirm that. But I think, based on the discussion of this group, I think based on what I heard is,

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we will still go with the hybrid model for the string confusion objection, that just provides another, I guess, mechanism to detect confusable strings if the string similarity review panels are unable to identify that. But we just need to confirm that.

So I think these are the three questions remaining that's related to the string similarity review. And I think the hardest one is probably the consequence of string similarity review, that one will probably need a little bit more discussion, but then the other two may be relatively easy to address. So that's my impression of these. Happy to hear others' thoughts on that if I'm missing something.

DONNA AUSTIN: Thanks, Ariel. So these are questions that we'll come back to in in the near term, now that we've kind of settled on where we're headed with the string similarity review. So we'll come back to those. So Ariel, I think maybe we'll just have a short call for today. And we'll get back into the swing of things next week. But is there anything else that we intended to cover on this call? I don't think there was.

ARIEL LIANG: We allocated the entire time for the risk assessment, but it seems we benefit from not doing that. It probably make it clear to do the risk assessment may be harder, but the group is converging on some direction for string similarity review. So that's great. And I see a Nigel has his hand up.

DONNA AUSTIN: Go ahead, Nigel.

NIGEL HICKSON: I just wanted to ask—and I think this has been very valuable indeed. And apologies if you covered this just before Christmas, because I think I missed the last call, but I'll be planning things at the ICANN meeting itself in March. I know it's some time away and we've got lots of meetings before then. But is there any thought of getting together physically?

DONNA AUSTIN: The answer to that is yes. And Ariel, do you have any information about when we will be doing that?

ARIEL LIANG: We did request two sessions. And if my memory is correct, I think it's similar to last meeting. We will have two sessions on the first day of the meeting, but I need to double check whether the secretariat team has developed that block schedule. But we definitely have two sessions.

DONNA AUSTIN: And Nigel, I think according to the timeline that we have in front of us, our plan is to publish the initial report in April. So I hope that where we are by the time we get together in Cancun is that we will be in the latter stages of reviewing the initial report that we'll be posting for public comment. So given that we missed the meeting before Christmas, I think Ariel also went through a timeline for

what we need to get done in the next few months, and what we intend to do when we get to Cancun. So that information is available.

And the other thing that we recognized is that we've moved the meeting up 30 minutes. That's mostly to accommodate the fact that I've moved from Los Angeles back to Australia. But what we've also flagged is that we've managed to do this call in an hour today, but if we need to have two-hour calls, then we will shift to that, if that will help us get through the work.

So if people can just keep that in the back of their mind as well. We've moved things up 30 minutes, but if you can still keep that two-hour block, that might be helpful for us, because I think we are going to need it at some point. So we may be shifting to two-hour calls in the near future if we think that we need to do so.

Okay, so with that, welcome back, everybody. It's great to get back into it again. And I think we'll give ourselves an early mark and say an hour is a good lead in to what's ahead of us in the next three months. So we will talk to you all again next week.

DEVAN REED: Thank you all so much for joining. Once again, this meeting is adjourned. I'll end the recording and disconnect all remaining lines. Have a wonderful rest of your day.

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[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]