



## "GLOBAL INTERNET: THE USER (NNENNA) PERSPECTIVE"

### LONDON – ICANN50 – AT-LARGE SUMMIT – JUNE 24, 2014

On June 22, a Sunday, I got an email. It read

“Please be aware that your website(s) may be at the risk of not functioning as 1 Order(s) will expire in the next few days.

***If these Orders are not renewed promptly, all related Website files, emails, databases etc. maybe permanently lost, and heavy restoration fees will be levied for deleted Domain Names.”***

First I felt threatened. I was afraid, because that domain name is my online identity. Not for once, for the 7 years I have held that domain name, have I felt so threatened.

Then I got angry.

Who is this anyway? Does this person know that a big chunk of my life depends on my online identity? Does this person know that payment is done online? Does this person know that for some of us, there is a lot of hassles associated with buying online? Why is he using scare tactics - saying “will expire in the next few days” when he should have been saying “in the next few weeks” as the contract actually expires on 1 August?

Then I started thinking.

Why should I be angry over an automated message for the renewal of a service linked to domain names? Why did I even assume it was a “he”? Why did I expect a reminder that was respectful? Why did I think that the provider cared about my person? Which got me thinking even deeper - fundamentally - do I have a right



to expect that organizations that are concerned with the technical coordination of online life and living also be mindful of human rights, social justice, and equitable and sustainable development?

That is the key question I came here today to ask. And I can't think of a better group of people to discuss it with.

Do I - as a citizen of the Web - have a right to expect that organizations that are concerned with the technical coordination of online life and living also be mindful of human rights, social justice, and equitable and sustainable development? And that they should even be responsible for helping to advance these issues?

My name is Nnenna. I come from the Internet. I still pay to maintain my 6 domain names. I work with the World Wide Web Foundation as the Africa Regional Coordinator. I work on two key projects. The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) and the Web We Want Campaign.

My objective with the Alliance for Affordable Internet is to lower the cost of broadband connection, and enable more people to become web citizens. My objective in working with the Web We Want Campaign is to ensure that Human Rights are respected online - as well, if not better than they are offline - with these rights clearly enshrined in law.

Friends, I still do not know why ICANN invited me here, but my question is: Do I have a right to expect that ICANN be not only concerned with discussing, debating and developing policies about the technical coordination of the Internet's Domain Name System but also work to advance human rights, social justice, and equitable, sustainable development?

### *On Names*

Of course - as everyone in this room knows - names and numbers online represent actual humans. They represent identities for persons, communities,



nations, businesses, governments. There are personalities behind names and numbers. For many users, their online identity is as important as their offline identity, if not more. It is right that organizations be aware of who they are serving, not just what they are delivering, and help users to build the Web We Want.

So

- when friends in the Caribbean say that they are feeling over-run by Latin Americans in the LACRALO, let us hear them.
- When users in Africa are saying that the “one size fits all” policy for Registrars' accreditation, please let us listen
- when the committee on public responsibility submits its report, let us act on it

*On community*

As well as keeping individual users in mind, organisations must be sensitive to the communities they operate in. ICANN has shown willingness to engage more stakeholders in its processes. I salute this progress. Of course, the challenge is great - the true ICANN community is not a few thousand, but several billion. Why? The policies of ICANN affect billions and that is the “Internet community”. If there is one thing that we took away from NetMundial, it is that the people who are gathered in a room during a meeting are not worth more than those participating remotely. Here, for ICANN, I dare to say that the “ICANN community is not worth more than the non-ICANN community”

And here comes that question again: Do I have a right to expect that ICANN be not only concerned with discussing, debating and developing policies about the technical coordination of the Internet's DNS with its community, but also be mindful of the billions out there, human rights, social justice, and equitable, sustainable development?



Let me personalise this. I am African, and I live in Africa. I work with the Web Foundation towards an open and accessible web. My desire is to see many more come online and use the Internet to get themselves out of poverty. Millions are coming online, and they need digital land-space and digital housing. The new gTLD has created landspace, and I can tell you that there are potential tenants. Not in million, but in billions. And many people that I have consulted are beginning to ask questions. Do we have a right to expect that ICANN be not only concerned with the technical coordination of the Internet's Domain Name System but also be mindful of the well-being of the present users and the users-to be?

- Does ICANN care about people being imprisoned because they exercise freedom of expression online?
- Does ICANN care that the average internet user in the developing world has to spend a third of their salary to get online, and in some countries citizens have to spend 5 times an average monthly salary to have good Internet access?
- Does ICANN care that governments, some of them hosting ICANN offices, will engage in massive surveillance of citizens, and shut down the Internet connection in the country at their whim?

Voilà my questions.

And c'est pas fini.

I have a few more. Not far from my main question. Do we have a right to expect that ICANN be not only concerned with the technical coordination of the Internet but also contribute to key initiatives that may not “traditionally” fall under “Internet Governance?”

- Initiatives that bridge the digital divide and seek to guarantee broadband affordability - like the Alliance for Affordable Internet?
- Initiatives that enhance online freedom, support the promotion and safeguard of privacy, and take action rather indulge in endless discussions and debates - like the Web We Want campaign?



- Initiatives that aim at making the IDN 100% usable in all contexts like the Universal Acceptance Initiative

From the look on your faces, I see “Yes We Can”. So in closing, I will make the following asks:

1. That ICANN pursues its policies not just with the technical in mind, but rather taking the entire ecosystem into account - widening the “stakeholder” view to see billions instead of thousands
2. That ICANN takes a second look at the “one size fits all” way of dealing with registrar
3. That the NextGen becomes the “Main Generation” as soon as possible. 15 years is already many generations in the digital world.
4. That ICANN “grows a heart” and explicitly recognises the crucial space it occupies at the intersection of the human and the technical. For now, many see the head and the hands, but we need to see a heart. A heart for action. A heart with a passion for extending access, securing and enhancing Human Rights, and for protecting and including the marginalised, such as the disabled or illiterate.

Before I take my seat, I want to remind us of our accountability duties. I am coming off Brazil, where I went to cheer my teams.

ICANN is accountable for ensuring that we get what we want on the Internet in an open, reliable, and secure way. It is ICANN's duty to be open and accountable throughout the IANA transition. That is what FIFA does for soccer

Governments are accountable for ensuring that proper legislative environments exist so that everyone can achieve their Internet-driven dreams. That is what national teams do.

The Industry is accountable too. To deliver services as agreed. We keep to the rules. That is what the football stars do when they play.



For us users, we are accountable for remaining positive in our use, our contribution and our promotion of the Internet and for paying our bills in time.

For me, I saved up money I bought a flight ticket to Brazil. I bought my game tickets, I cheered my team. And I shared my “selfies” on social media, so others can love and enjoy the game.

My name is Nnenna, I come from the Internet and I'm here to say:

Game on!