

ASO AC at ICANN 85 — Report on Community Questions and Responses on the RIR Governance Document

Introduction

During ICANN85 in Mumbai (7-12 March 2026), the Address Supporting Organization Address Council (ASO AC) held a series of public discussions on the development of the third and final draft of the [RIR Governance Document](#), also referred to as the revised Internet Coordination Policy 2 ([ICP-2](#)): Criteria for the Establishment of New Regional Internet Registries.

The engagements included joint sessions with the following:

- Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)
- Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC)
- At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)
- Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers Constituency (ISPCP)
- ICANN Board

The ASO also organized two public sessions with the broader ICANN community providing a recap and update of the current status of work.

This report provides a summary of the principal questions and responses across the above sessions. The ASO AC appreciates the engagement and feedback from the ICANN community and is developing version 3 of the document, which is intended to be presented to the RIR and ICANN communities in Q3-Q4 2026.

Overview

Across the engagements at ICANN85, community members asked how the revised RIR Governance Document would work in practice. The ASO AC clarified that the Document is intended to be a high-level governance framework. It is meant to establish principles, roles, and baseline obligations rather than detailed implementation rules. That distinction surfaced repeatedly when participants asked about jurisdiction, vetting mechanisms, audit scope, continuity arrangements, and the role of ICANN or a possible independent third party.

Key themes that emerged include:

- Recognition of a new RIR is no longer the only focus (as compared to ICP-2). The revised framework addresses the ongoing responsibilities of an RIR after recognition and introduces the concept of derecognition if an RIR can no longer meet its obligations.
- The Document aims to make previously implicit expectations explicit. Requirements that were understood to continue after recognition are now more clearly spelled out.
- Implementation remains a separate process. The text is intended to define principles and governance expectations, while operational details will be developed as Implementation Procedures by the RIRs and ICANN.
- Related to the above, resourcing and cost will be important. Several comments pointed to the practical challenge of funding and scoping implementation work.
- Accountability and continuity are central concerns. Discussion highlighted audits, backup systems, and mechanisms to protect service continuity for resource holders and operators.
- Uniformity matters, but so does flexibility. Participants acknowledged regional differences while also noting the need for globally consistent implementation.
- Role clarity matters. Some exchanges showed the importance of distinguishing between issues for the ASO AC, matters for individual RIRs, and broader strategic questions for the NRO.

Session highlights

Joint Session: ASO and Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) — 7 March 2026

[Full Session Records](#)

The exchange with GAC members brought a stronger public-interest and multistakeholder lens to the discussion. Questions focused on how audit failures would be handled in practice, whether timelines for corrective action should be made clearer, and at what stage the broader ICANN community, including the GAC, might still be able to comment as the document moves toward Board consideration.

The ASO AC acknowledged that more detail may still be needed on how audit findings and remediation expectations are expressed, while also reiterating that the current text is intended to remain a high-level governance document. They noted that three public consultations had already taken place and that, from the ASO AC perspective, no additional consultation round was currently foreseen before the document is sent onward in ICANN's approval process.

GAC participants also emphasized two broader concerns. First, they suggested that objective criteria — or at least clearly visible high-level performance parameters — would help communities assess whether an RIR is meeting its obligations, rather than relying on vague or reactive triggers. Second, they emphasized that recognition and derecognition decisions should reflect ICANN's multistakeholder model more visibly, particularly where affected territories and governments may have a strong interest in the outcome.

In response, the ASO AC said those concerns had been heard clearly and provided a formal response to the GAC. They indicated that the drafting group would consider whether some of these points belong in the document itself or in later implementation work, especially around audit criteria, accountability signals, and the role of broader stakeholder input.

Joint Session: ASO and RSSAC — 8 March 2026

[Full Session Records](#)

The discussion with RSSAC explored how recognition and derecognition might work in a geographically exclusive system. One participant asked, humorously, whether a would-be RIR would be waiting for an existing RIR to fail in order to take its place. The response was that recognition of a new RIR does not have to depend on the derecognition of an existing one. The framework is intended to establish general principles that could apply in different future scenarios.

ASO AC speakers emphasized that the preferred approach is not replacement through failure, but rehabilitation where possible. The goal would be to support an RIR so it can continue operating and return to an acceptable service level. Derecognition was described as an exceptional outcome, not a desired one.

The exchange also clarified that a new RIR could, under some circumstances, be created by taking over part of the service region of one or more existing RIRs. At the same time, the document preserves the principle that the number of RIRs should remain small and that recognition must be justified by community benefit, not by institutional expansion for its own sake.

Joint Session: ALAC and ASO AC — 8 March 2026

[Full Session Records](#)

The opening discussion focused on the purpose of the revisions. In response to a question about the "elevator pitch", ASO AC speakers explained that the previous framework concentrated on the recognition of new RIRs, whereas the revised document addresses what happens throughout the life of an RIR. This includes continued compliance with governance expectations, the possibility of derecognition in exceptional circumstances, and clearer role definition for the organizations involved.

When asked whether the criteria themselves had changed, the response was that the core expectations had not been fundamentally reinvented; rather, the revised text makes explicit some obligations that had previously been implicit. In other words, recognition standards are now more clearly linked to an ongoing duty to remain compliant over time.

Questions about ICANN's role led to clarification that, in the discussion, reference to ICANN as a reviewing body meant ICANN Org, because an implementing organization would be required if the governance document is to operate in practice.

Participants also asked about geopolitics and jurisdiction. The response was that the document is not tied to any specific country or legal system. It seeks to set global principles, while recognizing that each RIR must operate in its own legal and political environment. This distinction reinforced the idea that the document itself is not the implementation layer.

On the issue of operational uniformity, the discussion acknowledged that RIRs do not all operate in exactly the same way. Even so, speakers argued that implementation should be sufficiently uniform across regions and that an external coordinating role — identified in discussion as ICANN — could help achieve that consistency.

Another question addressed whether the document touches on IP address blocks outside the RIR system. The answer was no. Speakers reiterated that RIRs do not own Internet number resources; they administer them as technical coordinators according to community-developed policies. Legacy resources and region-specific arrangements fall outside the scope of this governance document.

Questions about continuity in the event of derecognition prompted the explanation that continuity mechanisms and backup systems would be needed so that services could continue without interruption, although the detailed design of those arrangements remains part of future implementation work.

On accountability, ASO AC speakers pointed to periodic and ad hoc audits as important transparency tools. They also noted that the formal public consultation stages had already taken place, although feedback was still being considered from ICANN community sessions.

Joint Session: ASO AC and ISPCP — 12 March 2026

[*Full Session Records*](#)

The ISPCP discussion was one of the most detailed of the week. Participants asked about recognition thresholds, vetting procedures, the identity of any reviewing body, and whether these elements belong in the governance document itself or in later implementation procedures.

ASO AC speakers explained that there had been substantial internal discussion over whether vetting should be carried out by ICANN or by an independent third party. They noted that clarity from ICANN would help determine the right implementation path and would also help define which matters belong in the governance text and which belong in Implementation Procedures required by the governance document.

Questions about whether a truly independent and sufficiently knowledgeable third party could be found highlighted the difficulty of separating expertise from institutional relationships in such a specialized field.

Participants also asked whether the revised framework had been stress-tested against both cooperative and adversarial scenarios. The ASO AC confirmed that scenario testing had informed the development process and noted that additional examples from the community would also be welcomed.

On audits and compliance obligations, ASO AC speakers explained that Article 4 lays out the requirements for recognition and that these obligations continue throughout the life of an RIR. Audits are therefore not limited to finances; they would assess whether an RIR continues to function as an RIR in line with the governance framework. At the same time, the importance of keeping the document at a sufficiently high level to ensure implementation remains practical and adaptable, was reiterated.

This session also included a request for clearer communication about the final stages of the process and whether there would be another round of public consultation. The ASO AC acknowledged the need for clarity on upcoming milestones and indicated that the timeline would be further discussed with ICANN before being published.

There were questions about future challenges, including rising demand for Internet number resources, emerging technologies, and evolving governance expectations. In response, the ASO AC noted that the governance document is intended to strengthen the institutional foundation on which RIRs operate. Broader

issues such as resource demand and technological change fall within the remit of NRO coordination and RIR operational activity, rather than the scope of the governance framework itself.

In response to a related question about what would happen if an RIR could no longer adequately serve its community, the ASO AC explained that the framework is designed to protect resource holders and operators by providing pathways such as emergency continuity measures and, only if necessary, derecognition. Speakers stressed again that derecognition is an extreme measure, not an intended outcome.

Finally, the ISPCP Chair welcomed the efforts to have minimal impact for the resource holders as described in the high-level document.

Joint Session: ICANN Board and ASO — 10 March 2026

[Full Session Records](#)

During the session with the ICANN Board, discussion shifted toward strategic, budgetary, and operational implications. Board members invited the RIRs to consider whether the revised governance framework could affect ICANN's strategic plan, annual operating plan, or budget. ICANN leadership stated that implementation costing will need dedicated discussion, especially because the full scope of implementation has not yet been defined. This underscored a recurring theme throughout the week — the governance framework may be high level, but implementation will have real resource consequences.

When asked whether RIR communities had discussed any implications for RIR financial contributions to ICANN, the response was that there had been no formal discussion. Informally, however, there was recognition that RIRs are part of the broader ICANN governance family and that any significant new implementation burden could have ripple effects on RIR budgeting and on how RIR membership communities assess those costs.

Another question focused on implementation challenges more broadly. The answer stressed the need to scope the work carefully. Over-scoping could make the process unwieldy, while overly narrow scoping might fail to deliver the intended accountability and continuity outcomes.

ASO Address Council Public Sessions — 8 and 12 March 2026

Public Session 1: [Full Session Records](#)

Public Session 2: [Full Session Records](#)

During the first ASO Address Council public session, community questions covered two broad areas: the status of IPv4 address space inside and outside the registry system, and whether the revised RIR Governance Document goes far enough in defining accountability obligations for Regional Internet Registries. The discussion again clarified a recurring distinction at ICANN 85 — which issues belong within the ASO AC's remit, and which rest with the individual RIRs or the NRO.

On IPv4, community members asked how much address space remains outside the RIR system or are reserved, and what actions are being taken worldwide to bring unused or legacy resources back into active registry management. Speakers responded that records do exist, but that precise figures would need to be provided later in writing. At the same time, ASO AC members stressed that operational follow-up on address recovery sits mainly with the RIRs rather than with the ASO AC itself. The discussion also linked this issue to a wider strategic shift: while some legacy recovery work continues in different regions, the broader direction for the RIR system is toward IPv6 adoption rather than long-term reliance on scarce IPv4 resources.

A second set of questions focused on whether the draft governance framework should include stronger service obligations, conflict-of-interest safeguards, contractual enforceability, and clearer triggers for action when an RIR fails to meet community expectations. In response, ASO AC speakers pointed to provisions in the draft concerning ongoing obligations, regular and ad hoc audits, and mechanisms that allow members of RIRs to trigger review processes. At the same time, it was emphasized that the document is intended to remain a high-level framework rather than an exhaustive operational manual. The discussion suggested that some of the detail sought by participants may be more appropriate for the Implementation Procedures

required by the document, while still acknowledging the community's desire for clearer assurance that the revised text addresses the problems that prompted the ICP-2 review.

At the wrap-up public session, several questions focused on governance legitimacy, conflicts of interest, and the relationship between the proposed process and the existing NRO-ICANN Memorandum of Understanding. One participant raised detailed concerns about whether the ICANN Board's role would be meaningful or merely confirmatory, whether supermajority voting could still recreate veto problems, and whether a peer voting model could adequately address conflicts of interest.

The response from ASO AC members was that many of these issues had already been raised during prior consultation rounds and were part of the drafting effort then underway. The speakers noted the complexity of designing a system that is globally coherent while still protecting regional community interests. They also reminded the audience that the current phase of work was focused on consolidating prior input and finalizing a draft for submission to the NRO EC and ICANN.

A follow-up question asked whether other Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees would be involved when a new RIR is recognized. The reply emphasized that the document's language should allow for a genuinely multistakeholder process and that community support would remain essential to recognition decisions.

Overall assessment

Taken together, the discussions at ICANN85 showed strong community interest in how the revised RIR Governance Document will operate in practice. The sessions revealed that many stakeholders want clarity on implementation and process legitimacy, and raised questions such as the precise role of ICANN, the feasibility of using an independent third party, how audits and continuity measures would be designed, how conflicts of interest would be managed.

The ASO AC has noted these concerns and where relevant will share them with the RIRs and ICANN as they work on the Implementation Procedures after the RIR Governance Document is finalized.