

Guidance on the GAC for Contracted Parties

What is the GAC?

The **Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)** is ICANN's formal body for national governments, distinct economies, and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) to provide **public policy advice** on ICANN's activities—especially where DNS operations intersect with law, regulation, and sovereign interests.

- ★ Members: ~180+ governments and ~40 IGOs/observers (e.g., ITU, UNESCO, WIPO as observers).
- ★ It is **advisory**, not legislative—but its advice carries significant weight in ICANN decision-making.

Where the GAC fits in ICANN's structure

ICANN's multistakeholder model includes:

- ★ **Supporting Organizations:** GNSO (includes RrSG & RySG), ccNSO, ASO
- ★ **Advisory Committees:** **GAC**, SSAC, RSSAC, ALAC

How GAC advice works

1

Issue Identification

Public policy concerns: consumer protection, abuse, data privacy, national law conflicts, geographic names, etc.

2

Communiqués

At each ICANN Public Meeting, the GAC publishes a formal communiqué containing advice and concerns.

3

Board Consideration

The ICANN Board must formally respond.

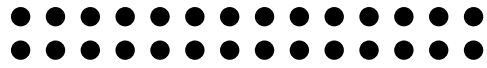
If the Board rejects GAC consensus advice, it must:

- State reasons, and
- Try to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

Implication: GAC Consensus Advice has a “special status” compared to other advisory input.



Reach out to secretariat@rrsg.org for any questions. More information available at www.rrsg.org



Topics the GAC most often addresses

Why Contracted Parties should pay attention

1

DNS Abuse & public safety

- ★ Pressure for stronger registrar/registry obligations
- ★ Discussions around:
 - Abuse reporting thresholds
 - Response timelines
 - Verification practices

2

RDAP / WHOIS & data protection

- ★ Law enforcement and consumer protection access
- ★ GDPR balance: privacy vs investigatory needs.
- ★ Input into:
 - Registration Data Policy
 - Standardized access frameworks (SSAD-like efforts)

3

New gTLD policy

- ★ Safeguards in application rounds
- ★ Public interest commitments (PICs/RVCs)
- ★ Sensitive strings (e.g. regulated sectors)

4

Geographic names

- ★ Protections for country / territory names
- ★ City / region objections
- ★ Impact on string availability

5

Customer protection & trust

- ★ Fraud prevention
- ★ Transparency requirements
- ★ Compliance enforcement expectations

Contractual & compliance impact

GAC Advice can have implications for our contracts and policies such as:....:

- New Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA) and Registry Agreement (RA) provisions
- Temporary or consensus policies
- Compliance audits or reporting duties

Operational changes

Examples of downstream effects:

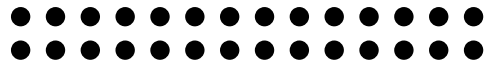
- Verification requirements (e.g., past WHOIS Accuracy Program work)
- Abuse point-of-contact obligations
- Data retention or disclosure frameworks

Market access & product strategy

- Restrictions on selling certain TLDs
- Regulated industry safeguards (pharma, finance, etc.)
- Geographic name reservation rules



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Practical Monitoring Checklist

Registrars and Registries should track:

- ★ GAC Communiqués (each ICANN meeting)
- ★ Board–GAC advice scorecards
- ★ Policy Development Processes (PDPs) with GAC input
- ★ Compliance advisories referencing public policy concerns



Engagement Opportunities for Contracted Parties

Even though registrars and registries are not GAC members, they can:

- ★ Monitor GAC communiqués
- ★ Participate in cross-community sessions at ICANN meetings
- ★ Engage directly with GAC representatives
- ★ Provide input via:
 - GNSO Stakeholder Groups
 - Public comments
 - Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG) and Registry Stakeholder Group (RySG) coordination

Early engagement helps mitigate operational surprises.



How to identify your local GAC representative?
Go to <https://gac.icann.org/about/gac-members>

Key takeaways for Contracted Parties

- The GAC represents **governmental public policy interests** in ICANN.
- Its **consensus advice carries elevated influence** with the ICANN Board.
- It frequently shapes:
 - DNS Abuse obligations
 - Registration data access frameworks
 - New gTLD safeguards
- While indirect, its impact on registrar and registry contracts and operations can be significant.
 - Proactive monitoring and policy
 - engagement are essential.



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