

24 November 2025

Rafik Dammak
Chair, ICANN Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group

Re: Request for Clarification on ICANN's Engagement with Smart Africa and the Proposed Council of African Internet Governance (CAIGA)

Dear Rafik,

Thank you for your comprehensive letter of [19 November 2025](#), on behalf of the Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group (NCSG), seeking clarification of ICANN's relationship with Smart Africa, specifically around the development of the proposed Council of African Internet Governance (CAIGA). I recognize that this issue has drawn significant attention from across the ICANN community and particularly among stakeholders from the African Internet community, and I agree that clarification is beneficial for all.

The CAIGA proposal is embedded into the IG Blueprint draft that Smart Africa commissioned. Smart Africa is one of the partners to the Coalition for Digital Africa (CDA). As I explained in my [18 November 2025 blog](#) on ICANN's Commitment to the Africa Community, ICANN and Smart Africa are parties to a [Memorandum of Understanding](#), as well as to Project Agreement through which ICANN committed \$40,000 for Smart Africa to develop a reference document – the IG Blueprint – that sets out a long-term vision and roadmap for Internet governance in Africa.

I recognize that it can be difficult to separate the issues of authorship and endorsement from funding. I take this opportunity to stress: ICANN did not enter either the MoU or the Project Agreement with the intention that the IG Blueprint would propose a new governance model for the RIR serving the region of Africa and the Indian Ocean. ICANN did not request Smart Africa to deliver any proposals on the governance of AFRINIC, and ICANN did not preevaluate the resulting CAIGA proposal.

Within ICANN, we understand the concerns that have been raised about the CAIGA proposal. As ICANN has monitored the governance crisis facing AFRINIC over the past few years, ICANN's evaluation and interventions have been firmly rooted in the principles of [ICP-2](#), which governs the recognition of and the [ongoing commitments](#) of the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs). ICP-2 provides significant guidance to how ICANN would consider any proposal to modify or replace an existing RIR structure, including requirements such as:

- RIRs should be established as independent, not-for-profit and open membership associations.

- RIRs must maintain the ongoing support of their communities. A community must also show that it is willing to support the RIR vigorously.

Any change in the structure of the governance of an RIR must abide by the ICP-2 principles. As currently set out in the IG Blueprint, it is not clear to ICANN that the CAIGA proposal meets this test. If any proposal to modify AFRINIC's governance structure would come to ICANN, ICANN commits that it will neutrally and objectively evaluate that proposal. To be clear, ICANN has not pre-endorsed CAIGA or any other model as an acceptable model for the governance of an RIR. The fact that the CAIGA proposal was developed through a project that used ICANN funding does not give it any level of priority or provide any exemption from meeting the ICP-2 principles.

I see concerns raised in your note suggesting that ICANN's participation in the development of the CAIGA has not been made public. The reason for that is clear - ICANN's coordination with Smart Africa has not been focused on developing CAIGA. ICANN's coordination with Smart Africa is focused more broadly on issues related to Internet governance in Africa, which we [announced](#) in November 2024. The Coalition for Digital Africa initiative on Internet Governance Capacity Building, which ICANN's Project Agreement with Smart Africa supports, is also [publicly described](#). This cooperation between Smart Africa and ICANN aims to support a regional dialogue on Internet Governance in the context of Smart Africa Flagship Project on Internet Governance launched in 2020 by Smart Africa.

Smart Africa and its consultant included CAIGA as a portion of the broader IG Blueprint, produced through the ICANN/Smart Africa Project Agreement. At times during the development of the IG Blueprint draft ICANN was approached with requests to provide substantive inputs to guide the CAIGA proposal, but in each case ICANN confirmed to Smart Africa that ICANN could only provide reference to publicly available documentation, including to ICP-2, and that ICANN could not and would not provide advice, inputs, or otherwise be substantively involved in any entity's consideration of how they will respond to the issues posed by the AFRINIC situation. ICANN would respond the same to any other entity seeking to develop a proposal for the governance of any other RIR. ICANN has not and will not "participate in [] governmental override mechanisms" for any RIR, including AFRINIC.

In the event that any proposal to modify the governance of an RIR is presented to ICANN under ICP-2, whether it is the CAIGA or otherwise, ICANN would expect that such a proposal is fully vetted and supported by the community served by that RIR. While ICANN meetings have been and will remain a place to facilitate some of that community dialogue, the responsibility for coordination of full community consultation on a proposal does not lie with ICANN. If you have questions about the sufficiency of the consultation on the CAIGA with AFRINIC and its members, I encourage you to reach out to Smart Africa. Notably, I've heard that Smart Africa is considering a broader public consultation on the draft IG

Blueprint, and ICANN would fully encourage that effort. ICANN recognizes that many in the community first learned of CAIGA and the broader IG Blueprint during the Smart Africa presentations made last month during ICANN's 84th Public Meeting in Dublin, Ireland. ICANN urges that sufficient time for engagement, and the meaningfully addressing resulting contributions, is essential for a strong, multistakeholder-supported outcome.

The pending Address Supporting Organization (ASO) process on updating ICP-2 is also an important aspect to this conversation. If the RIR communities wish to have the ability for an RIR to be governed in the way that CAIGA proposes for AFRINIC, to allow direct governmental involvement in RIR governance (separate from governmental participation as members of an RIR), now is the time for those proposals to be raised and evaluated in the ICP-2 conversation. The updated ICP-2/RIR governance document, once approved by ICANN after the community processes conclude, will provide the principles for the evaluation and maintenance of RIRs well into the future.

The concerns raised in your letter are fundamental to the trust in the coordination of the Internet's unique identifier systems. While it is hard to "prove a negative", I assure you that ICANN has acted carefully to maintain its neutrality in this situation and to uphold the principles of the numbering system and multistakeholderism. We have not, and will not, contribute to the design of entities that later come to us for approval to serve as RIRs. We have not, and will not, pre-endorse proposals that do not align with the principles for recognition or maintenance of RIRs. We have not, and will not, replace the role of the local Internet community in considering their support of any emerging proposal.

ICANN will continue to serve its mission through supporting the development of robust and informed participation in Internet governance issues. As we learned here, these regional efforts might veer into issues of RIR governance. If that happens, ICANN will document clearly how it is engaging (or not) on those issues, to reduce the chance of misunderstandings happening again in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Kurt Erik Linqvist
President and Chief Executive Officer
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

cc: Tripti Sinha, Chair of the ICANN Board of Directors