

# CIS Statement at ICANN 49's Public Forum

*Centre for Internet and Society* | 2014-03-27

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*This was a statement made by Pranesh Prakash at the ICANN 49 meeting (on March 27, 2014), arguing that ICANN's bias towards the North America and Western Europe result in a lack of legitimacy, and hoping that the IANA transition process provides an opportunity to address this.*

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Good afternoon. My name is Pranesh Prakash, and I'm with the Yale Information Society Project and the Centre for Internet and Society.

I am extremely concerned about the accountability of ICANN to the global community. Due to various decisions made by the US government relating to ICANN's birth, ICANN has had a troubled history with legitimacy. While it has managed to gain and retain the confidence of the technical community, it still lacks political legitimacy due to its history. The NTIA's decision has presented us an opportunity to correct this.

However, ICANN can't hope to do so without going beyond the current ICANN community, which while nominally being 'multistakeholder' and open to all, grossly under-represents those parts of the world that aren't North America and Western Europe.

Of the 1010 ICANN-accredited registrars, 624 are from the United States, and 7 from the 54 countries of Africa. In a session yesterday, a large number of the policies that favour entrenched incumbents from richer countries were discussed. But without adequate representation from poorer countries, and adequate representation from the rest of the world's Internet population, there is no hope of changing these policies.

This is true not just of the business sector, but of all the 'stakeholders' that are part of global Internet policymaking, whether they follow the ICANN multistakeholder model or another. A look at the boardmembers of the Internet Architecture Board, for instance, would reveal how skewed the technical community can be, whether in terms of geographic or gender diversity.

Without greater diversity within the global Internet policymaking communities, there is no hope of equity, respect for human rights – civil, political, cultural, social and economic –, and democratic functioning, no matter how 'open' the processes seem to be, and no hope of ICANN accountability either.