Candidate statement for NCSG Chair election 2015

Name, declared region of residence, gender and employment:

Tapani Tarvainen, Europe, male, chief engineer at Jyväskylä University, Finland.

Any conflicts of interest:

None.

Reasons for willingness to take on the tasks of the particular position:

I have been fighting for freedom of expression and privacy almost all my life, looking for positions where I could make a difference. The Internet has become the major battlefield in that war, ICANN a key participant and NCSG a natural home for my distinctly non-commercial viewpoint.

Given my experience and skillset, I think I would be most useful in an administrative position that also requires technical knowledge.

So, while I was surprised and indeed humbled when asked to run for Chair, I think it is a position where I could be effective and useful.

My vision of an Executive Committee, which the Chair leads, is something like a well-oiled machine, virtual train engine if you like, that does its job in the background and carries the people who do the greater part of policy work to where they need to go without getting in their way.

We have been lucky to have strong, extremely hard-working Chairs like Rafik Dammak and Robin Gross, who somehow managed to do an amazing amount of policy work alongside the administrative stuff. But we really should not depend on having such exceptional people working for us: we need a self-supporting structure so to speak, an organization that doesn't depend upon a specific individual so much. Rafik clearly realized this when he set out to improve the operational aspects of NCSG. I would like to continue his work there.

More concretely, here are a few things I'd like to do:

- Improve and document administrative task execution to minimize overhead, to ensure continuity when people come and go and to make everything more transparent so that members can easier follow what's going on and participate without having to hunt all over for deadlines or references to what's been done before.

- Push for more transparency in everything ICANN does. This is especially important with the transition going on: the more decisions are made and prepared in secret, the more power will slip away from formally democratic organs and elected representatives, and poorly-funded non-commercial interests will be the first to suffer.

- Improve and automate membership management in such a way as to help constituencies as well, enabling members to easily review and update their own data. We need to avoid error-prone processes like having address changes done in three different places by staff.

- Activate the NCSG Finance Committee and apply for grants to enable NCSG to do more things on its own as well as by giving money to constituencies to do their own projects.

- Set up an independent website for NCSG, one not under ICANN control, to improve our visibility as well as to collect all our archives, mailing list and other resources to one place where they're easily found. It should also include a collaborative platform usable by all members, including those in countries where Google Docs and the like can't be used – which has been a problem even for NCUC EC, as Zuan Zhang (Peter Green) has pointed out.

- Push for more travel support, in particular to improve diversity of participation: even though NCSG is more diverse than most stakeholder groups or constituencies, there is still lot of room for improvement, let alone in ICANN as a whole. I would like to work with other SG Chairs here,

including finding a consistent way of reporting member's geographical and gender distribution.

- Facilitate more joint NCUC-NPOC activities when both want to and there's a common interest, as there is in many cases. Coordinate meetings with constituency chairs prior every ICANN meeting to ensure we have NCSG presence whenever possible.

- Choose a Vice-Chair for the NCSG Executive Committee to better reflect the diversity of our stakeholder group and to ensure there will always be someone able speak for us despite vacations, illnesses etc.

- Make better use of monthly policy calls, e.g., by adding a councillor-only part or separate call (others allowed as listeners) to allow them to talk amongst themselves about the upcoming agenda, inviting guest speakers (senior staff, Chairs of other SGs, leaders of our organizational members, etc).

- Improve collaboration with our academic members, perhaps setting up some kind of student research/internship program to produce independent research our community can use, like Arun Sukumar's students have already done.

- Facilitate the production of more accessible documentation on who we are and what we do in NCSG, including briefs on our key issues.

Qualifications for the position:

My job at Jyväskylä University has, as the result of a series of organizational changes over the years, become a mixture of legal and specialized technical support for researchers, sort of Special Circumstances department called upon for things regular IT support can't handle, with occasional teaching thrown in the mix. While I'm not trained as a lawyer, in both my work at the university and in Electronic Frontier Finland I have had to learn enough to claim some expertise in certain areas of Finnish and European law, in particular those concerning freedom of expression, privacy, data protection and copyright. I have served as a deputy member in the Finnish Data Protection Board since 2012. I was also appointed to the Finnish government's Advisory Board on Copyright Affairs at the beginning of 2015.

I served in the NCUC executive committee in 2012−2013 and this past year I was selected by the NCUC to replace long-standing member Milton Mueller on the NCSG executive committee, so I have a good understanding on how these committees work and function.

I have extensive experience with other civil society organizations, in particular Electronic Frontier Finland (Effi), where I was President for five years and Vice President for a total of ten years (still serving in the latter role). Until July 2015 Effi has been 100% volunteer-driven organization with no paid staff, and I've been doing all kinds of tasks there, from building and managing member database to writing analyses on proposed legislation and presenting them to parliamentary committees and discussing them in national television.

I have been active in the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) since its foundation in 2006, and amongs other things I'm presently serving in the Steering Committee of Internet Rights and Principles coalition. I have also been a regular speaker in the Finnish Internet Forum since its founding in 2010.

I am used to working with people of widely varying cultural backgrounds in Effi, in my present job at the university, where I regularly interact with foreign students and researchers, and in my previous job with Lucent Technologies in Saudi Arabia, where I trained system administrators for Saudi Telecom's mobile network management systems.

I also have a solid technical understanding of the Domain Name System and its underpinning technologies.

Statement of availability for the time the position requires:

Yes: I have agreed with my employer, Jyväskylä university, to be able to use working hours to Chair the NCSG. Combined with personal time and my ability to decrease my activity in Effi with the hiring of our new Executive Director I've made sure I will have enough time to properly Chair our stakeholder group.