

July 9, 2025

To: ICANN CEO and Board members

Re: False assertions in ICANN's letter to AFRINIC Official Receiver

Dear Mr. Lindqvist and ICANN Board members,

I write to you in my capacity as Editor-in-Chief of BTW Media to express serious concern over statements made by ICANN's CEO, Mr. Kurtis Lindqvist, in his letter dated 3 July 2025 to Mr. Gowtamsingh Dabee (the Official Receiver of AFRINIC). In that correspondence, Mr. Lindqvist made several remarks that are both inaccurate and troubling, especially coming from the leader of what is meant to be a non-partisan organization. I wish to address these issues directly and request corrective action.

Misrepresentation of Our Reporting: In his letter, Mr. Lindqvist refers to our news platform and the articles we published about the recent AFRINIC board election and a disputed proxy vote. He notes (based on a prior communication I had with ICANN) that our platform "is funded by the CEO of Cloud Innovation Ltd", and then goes on to state that we "maintain that only a single fraudulent power of attorney was discovered." This characterization is false. At no point have any of our articles described the power of attorney in question, the proxy vote, or any election detail as "fraudulent." In fact, our coverage carefully referred to the vote in question as a "suspicious proxy vote" or an "unverified proxy", indicating uncertainty rather than fraud. We take accuracy very seriously in our reporting, and it is a gross misrepresentation for Mr. Lindqvist to claim we used such language when we did not. This false attribution undermines the hard work my team of reporters has done to factually cover the events surrounding the AFRINIC election.

Impact on Credibility and Request for Correction: Mr. Lindqvist's public misstatement about our reporting is not a trivial matter. By suggesting that we alleged a document was "fraudulent" when we made no such claim, the letter effectively disparages our publication's credibility. Such a claim, coming from ICANN's CEO in an official communication, risks misleading the community and stakeholders about what BTW Media has reported. We therefore respectfully **request that Mr. Lindqvist and ICANN issue a public correction** regarding this matter. It is important that those following AFRINIC's election and its aftermath are not misled by misinformation contained in ICANN's official correspondence. A clear correction will help restore the factual record and reassure readers that ICANN's leadership does not endorse incorrect assertions about independent media coverage.

Independence of the Press: I am also compelled to address the broader implications of Mr. Lindqvist's comments. His letter highlights our platform's funding source in a context that appears intended to cast doubt on our independence. Let me assure you that BTW Media's editorial decisions are made with journalistic integrity, irrespective of funding sources. Calling attention to our funding in this manner was unnecessary and can be read as an attempt to discredit our reporting without basis. Even more alarming, the letter questions how our outlet obtained information about the election investigation and asks the Official Receiver to detail what information was shared with parties including our media outlet. Such a request in an official ICANN letter gives the impression that engaging with the press or providing information to journalists is somehow improper. We find it highly unusual – and inappropriate – for the CEO of ICANN to scrutinise or discourage an appointed official's communications with the media. Any suggestion that those involved in these events should withhold information from the press, or that the press ought to be “kept in the dark,” runs contrary to the principles of transparency and accountability that ICANN and the wider Internet governance community profess to uphold.

In conclusion, the tone and content of the 3 July 2025 letter are inconsistent with ICANN's role as a neutral steward in the Internet ecosystem. An attempt by ICANN's CEO to influence how a court-appointed receiver performs his duties with regard to transparency and media engagement is deeply concerning. **Any effort to intimidate or silence voices reporting on these events is an affront to freedom of the press and the free flow of information.** It stands in direct contrast to our community's values of openness and accountability. I urge ICANN's leadership to reflect on these issues and take corrective steps. A public clarification of Mr. Lindqvist's misstatement about our reporting would be a welcome first step, and a reaffirmation of ICANN's commitment to impartiality and respect for the role of independent media would be strongly appreciated.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that ICANN will address these concerns promptly in the spirit of fairness and accuracy.

Kind regards,
James Durston
Editor-in-Chief, BTW Media

We reserve all our rights.