I E T F®

Making the Internet work better

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7 February 2023

<u>For the attention of Sophia Yakhno and Tim Cowen</u>

Re: W3C Process and Operation

Dear Sophia and Tim

We are writing in reply to your correspondence of 1/25/2023 and 1/26/2023 regarding the W3C.

Your correspondence includes the following statement that needs correcting:

> *"...with the basic transport and functioning of the web, which is the responsibility of the IETF as a standards maker to maintain."*

The IETF coordinates development of the HTTP protocol as most recently documented in STD 97[1], a core protocol used by web services, but that does not equate to a responsibility for the functioning of the web.

Your correspondence also includes the following assertion that appears to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of the IETF:

> *"In a similar way as the W3C, time has come for the IETF to recognise its significance as making decisions that govern a resource used by many businesses and over 5 billion users. Hence, heavier consideration to due process should be taken to ensure that the standards being developed are*

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[1] https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/std97

truly impartial advancing the technological composition of the web rather than modelled to the benefit of some groups over others, which reinforce market positions and affect market outcomes."

The Internet Standards Process as described in BCP 9[2], is designed to "provide a fair, open, and objective basis for developing, evaluating, and adopting Internet Standards," and provides robust procedural rules, including an appeals process.

There is no membership of the IETF. Anyone can participate by signing up to a mailing list. The IETF welcomes all interested individuals and participants come from all over the world and from many different parts of the Internet industry. In any one year, over 7000 people actively participate in the IETF either by authoring a document, engaging in a mailing list discussion, or attending a meeting.

All IETF participants are required to comply with a range of policies including the following:

- The IETF framework that participants engage in their individual capacity, not as company representatives (see BCP 95[3]), and "use their best engineering judgment to find the best solution for the whole Internet, not just the best solution for any particular network, technology, vendor, or user," as described in BCP 54[4].
- The Working Group Guidelines and Procedures described in BCP 25[5], which emphasize requirements for "open and fair participation and for thorough consideration of technical alternatives," and describe IETF's consensus-based decision-making processes.

While we solicit and receive sponsorship in order to operate, the companies and organizations that sponsor us are not given any special say in the standards process. All individuals appointed to leadership positions of the standards process are chosen by the community, on merit, irrespective of their employer and any sponsorship they

[2] https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/bcp9
[3] https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/bcp95
[4] https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/bcp54
[5] https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/bcp25

may have provided. Furthermore, the three key standing leadership bodies each have a documented conflict of interest policy.

We trust this explanation will allay your concerns about the IETF.

As to your concerns with the W3C, we note that we have no ownership or other responsibility for the W3C and it therefore would be inappropriate for us to comment on or discuss your client's concerns.

Kind regards

Jay Daley
IETF Executive Director