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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce Oversight of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet June 4, 2009

I am pleased that the Subcommittee is holding this timely hearing on the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN.

As will be discussed today, the Joint Project Agreement between the Department of Commerce and ICANN will expire on September 30, 2009. Around that time ICANN is proposing to introduce an unprecedented number of new generic Top Level Domain names and its Chief Executive Officer, Paul Twomey, is preparing to depart.

Many experts believe that ICANN is facing one of the most critical junctures in its short history. Some believe that how ICANN manages these events could significantly impact not only the global Internet community, but the world economy.

I am pleased that ICANN CEO Paul Twomey is able to join our distinguished panel of witnesses today to shed light on the mission, structure, and governance of ICANN. For the past 11 years, ICANN has played a critical role ensuring the growth, security, and stability of the global Internet. And most would agree that the organization has come a very long way since the Clinton Administration helped establish ICANN.

As we review ICANN's capabilities and resources in relation to the effective and efficient operation of the Domain Name System, we must not lose sight of how this organization affects 1.5 billion Internet users worldwide. It is not just the registers, registrars, e-commerce providers, or government entities that have a stake in ICANN. Every person who relies on the Internet for work, entertainment, study, or simply to manage a hectic schedule, should care about this issue.

It is from that perspective that I am interested in what today's panelists have to say about whether ICANN has matured to the point where the Joint Project Agreement with the

Department of Commerce should be allowed to expire. More specifically, can ICANN on its own “promote stability and security, competition, bottom-up coordination and representation?” Or do we need to maintain direct U.S. government involvement for a while longer?

I also hope today’s hearing will explore ICANN’s recent proposal to expand greatly the number of generic top-level domain (g-TLDs) names. Although I generally believe that expanding the number of g-TLDs is consistent with ICANN’s mission to promote competition and consumer choice, I want to make sure that any such process takes into account the concerns of various stakeholders, including those that are concerned about protecting trademarks.

I look forward to learning more about these issues from our distinguished panelists.