

Interviewee: Fadi Chehad é
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Abstract

Mr. Chehad é was born in Beirut of Egyptian parents who had lived in various parts of the world before they settled in Lebanon. He went to America for study when he was 18 alone where he learned computer science in Community colleges, artificial intelligence and management in Stanford under the support of AT&T. In this interview, Fadi discusses his family—His family is from a Coptic Catholic minority in Egypt, and he identifies as such. In Beirut, he attended a French Catholic school, speaking French at school and Arabic afterwards, until at the age of 13 his father decided to send him to Damascus due to violent tensions and the Lebanese civil war. He discusses his work in ICANN and his future plan.

00:40:

FC: I mean, look if you want to go deep into the beginning it might be helpful for you to also meet Steve Crock. The chairman of ICANN, the current chairman. Because Steve really was at the very beginning, I mean he used to carry Cerf on his shoulders to have him sneak through the UCLA computer lab so you can sneak through the window. I mean these are people, and he and Vint Cerf. We're buddies and in high school, they set up a math club that led to their interest in computers. You get a lot of the initial history. Steve is a good story teller, and so is Vint but Steve is an amazing teller.

03:15

BZ: you were born in Lebanon, in what year you came to the United States?

FC: I came to the USA at the age of eighteen, 1980. Mostly to seek studies. It wasn't my first choice to come to America, because I didn't speak English. I was French educated. But my parents wanted me to come to America, So I came here on my own , I learned English in what they called Community colleges, those are small colleges, And started taking classes. I took philosophy class. And teacher called me after the class, he said it was class of logic, and he think I am particularly good at subject. I say, thank you. Do you know what computers are? I said I don't know, I didn't know .

BZ: What year is that?

FC: In nineteen eighty, I just came from Lebanon, I never seen one, so he says you should study computer science, what is this? He said Just go, you don't speak English, So the computer science is good. You can sit behind desk and program, I didn't know what he's talking about. From there I took interest in the subject, I got a scholarship to

go to New York, I got a degree on computer science, then I went to Bell labs. At that time, Bell labs was hall of science and knowledge. I started to understanding how vast this field is, and how interesting it is. A t & t, at that time which was the parent of labs, offer me to go to any college in the world, fully paid, Even my salary continues to pay. So I went to Stanford to study artificial intelligence and management. So I took a dual degree. In fact, when I finished, my professor told me that there will be no jobs for you, nobody wants you. But I said I like the subject, I like the concept, I learnt it, but I couldn't find a job in it. There was no job in that field, too early. But I kept that in my heart my mind, as phenomenal ways for us use computer to enhance the quality of life. But I ended up being someone in networking and very early on I started working in field of communications and networking and I built my first company and sold successfully and then I build another company and IBM acquired it from me in 2006. And then I went back to Los Angeles started my third Software company and that's when ICANN approached me. So that's a little bit kind of my journal into this field.

06:26

BZ: So at the very beginning in when you sort of like it out of Stanford campus you cannot find a job, is there any sort of discouragements happen to you ?.

FC: no, I was young and I needed to work to support myself and to help my family immigrate to America. So there was a big part of me that needed a pass to a job, in order to support my goals of helping my family come out of war zone Beirut. Having said that AT&T was superbly genitals they paid for my school. And they paid also for my salary while I'm at school. So and they didn't even give me a requirement to come back. They said you're free to come back if you want to.

07:19

FC: So I took this very generous act by them. And I decided to study something that is not necessary for a job but something to enhance my understanding of the future of computing. I think if I was just paying for my education and I need to find a job. I probably would not have study that. But I was very lucky and fortunate that I had the opportunity to study both management and artificial intelligence. So I took classes from the inventor of the language Lisp and so on he was still teaching at Stanford so I was very lucky at the time was an early field.

07:55

BZ: While that sounded you know, so how do you think that your experiences eventually prepared yourself for the ICANN position as a leadership role. You know the internet industry.

08:09

FC: Look, you know many things in life prepare you for leadership. I believe leadership is that is the sum of many experiences one has. Clearly my Stanford experience, especially the generosity of my employer affected me. And for years as I became successful in my career, I was searching for a way to give back to the

community just like AT&T and this country the United States to which I arrived penniless, gave me a chance to learn English and to stand on my feet I had great respect for that generosity. So when the ICANN job came, I had just started my latest software company and I was excited and we already had 30-40 engineers and I was planning to grow that. But then frankly, it was my children, my own two children at dinner table said, dad this is the time to give back, you have to leave and go do that.

09:13

BZ: So moneywise said—you were losing a lot of salary while you pick up the ICANN position

FC: yeah I did. But what I gained is far more than money. I gained the chance to serve. And to do something completely outside of my normal experience building companies and building value in software and Telecommunications systems. But I gained enormous, I mean, and frankly, just the understanding of public service as a way to enlarge one's mind. It was something I didn't. To be honest I did not understand fully how this will happen. But the experience of five years of ICANN was priceless.

10:09

BZ: Right I'm eager to listen to your ICANN t but before it goes there I'd like to ask you specifically you mention of AT&T, **is company generally give you this kind of generous approach, or just some executive sort of like the is Hugh you are take them all right you are really appreciates like what you've been there** —(??)so how is the situation.

FC: AT&T at the time. I don't know if they have this program today. But that's it. Program that existed for decades before I came. Every year they would look at some of the new young engineers they bring onboard. And then they would offer them something called “One year on campus” where you can go for a year to any reputable school. And they will pay for your schooling and for your salary while you're at school. And they did not require you come back to AT&T. So I was a beneficiary of this program at that time and when I finished it at Stanford I called my boss and I said I'm done, Mr. Willen, what are my requirements and he said nothing. He says we welcome you back to our family but you can also stay in the Silicon Valley what would you like to do. I did come back I did come back and I worked for a number of years it was my duty to at least to complete that circle.

11:41

BZ: Okay I understand so that's like a sort of a cooperates culture, instead of like the personal connection and you know you could friends with someone

FC: I had to qualify for the program, not everybody...IBM does the same and Intel does senior thing, previously Westinghouse.

BZ: They used to do that, it's very true. This come to your or you know after you work as a private company boss, And you know the industry so well you got approached because of your reputation because of your expertise to lead ICANN. So what would you think, would you do, so how do you think about your highlights here and you absolutely do a lot of fantastic, extraordinary things here, so what are one of those highlights or hurdles you fail.

12:37

FC: Look. ICANN is a unique organization. It is managing and coordinating that is heart of internet that is not very well understood. But that is crucial. What attracted me to ICANN, why I said yes. Besides my commitment to public service was the idea that ICANN was in many ways the guarantor of one internet for the world, and that's a very powerful thing, because in fact the internet backbone has almost a hundred thousand networks. There is no one internet network. But it's ICANN's unique identifiers that make those hundred thousand networks appear like one internet.

13:38

BZ: You mean follow the same protocol

FC: well, all the I. P. addresses are unique. So that any device you know today we have 22 billion things connected to the internet. Everyone of them has unique address because of ICANN. The route system of the internet for the domain name system guarantees that if you type IBM.com. Anywhere in the world. You get to that one machine that IBM has be attached to be IBM.com. The protocol parameters which allow for the routine to work tables of routine. So these three responsibilities of ICANN are what makes the internet look like one network. I was very attracted to that idea, because so many things in the world divide us.

BZ: Even the train track that go to your country doesn't work.

FC: But this really provided even philosophically. The platform or the ability to make us all work on one network Or with appears to be one network because it's a logical layer not a physical layer. I love that. And that's what move me to put the time in there. My ICANN mission, I was focused on one main job, is to make ICANN truly the world's organization. ICANN when I started was not very much a world organization.

15:18

It was our offices were generally in Anglo Saxon countries in the United States, Australia, in Washington, in San Francisco, in Belgium. We didn't have a diversity of offices and posture. All the headquarters were in the U. S.. We were managed by the U. S. government contract. All of these things made ICANN not function like a true global organization. My mission was to change that. And so I think I had a pretty clear plan that I agreed with the board to do during the first six months of my day. But then something happened. Six months into my tenure, Edward Snowden revealed some issues. And that change the dialogue, suddenly the issue of who, what I quote on the internet, that runs the internet became a political issue.

16:33

Suddenly you have President Rousseff opening the United Nations in 2013 say you know who runs the internet, who allows for these my phone to be bugged and where are the rules. **You had Anglo ...**—(??) call for European internet so suddenly the pressure on the one internet. So this global attention suddenly to the workings of internet and how the internet functioned became central. So my mission which was to globalize ICANN suddenly became even more urgent and the pressures to break the logical infrastructure of internet to have multiple internet became very very heavy.

17:25

And we need to therefore not just go about our plan and structured to it, we need to react to a crisis a little bit. The crisis that would have divided the logical infrastructure of the internet that ICANN coordinated into multiple ones. And I felt that this would have been a huge failure I might have. At the same time I had to expedite my plan to make ICANN truly global, so we went from 1 people to 350 people. We went from a few locations as I mentioned that are generally in the western world to thirty some countries with headquarters divided between Singapore, Istanbul and Los Angeles. So we change the organization, we proceeded to work with the US government to end their decades long relationship to I CANN. As a unique, you know, I wouldn't say governing because it's the people who governed ICANN but at least certainly supervisory and you know stewardship and supervisory relationship.

18:33

So we had to do all about that and we had to convince frankly many countries around the world, including Europeans and the Brazilians, China., India and many others. That ICANN can serve them in a fair way in opening and equal way on a long term basis and that was our big project. And we achieved it. We achieved it

BZ: But I understand that is ICANN have some issues with US government even like within the government were saying ready to go be truly global or US control some people worried oh my gosh, who control

FC: yes, yes

BZ: So Edward Snowden`s issues sort of speed up this kind of conversation.

FC: Certainly I mean there's no question that. The... What Edward Snowden did is bring the attention to the issue. It didn't so suddenly, you know, even the issue say in a certain government was being dealt with. Somebody who reported somebody reported to somebody who reported to the director general and the minister and the prime minister. Now suddenly you had ministers and prime ministers talking about this. So people suddenly said how was this all managed. And who are the organization that making sure this is working. So I think that's what was precipitated by that situation. And so in a way it may have helped focus minds on what do we do

20:13

BZ: so what`s your... you know, you have a lot of pressures to get everything done correctly or immediately, you needed engage so many countries like 35 countries, and get them involved. So how those stays, and you work things out , you know you wear smile.

FC: it was very delicate it was a very delicate discussion. During years at ICANN, I did about million kilometers of flying per year. I was flying nonstop. We were running around the world talking to global leaders in business and government. So what was the message we're giving.

One, that we can ensure that ICANN will do its job without the unique interference of one entity. That everything we will do will be transparent and open and all entities: governments, businesses, civil society technical, Individuals are all sitting in an equal cushion to deal with this technical matter because it is a technical matter. But it has a major impact on economy or society.

However, we need to convince them that we can all be equal at the table, now, the flip to that point is, well, how could you tell me this when you have a contract with the US government, well, one simple answer could be, but the US government has been very benevolent, has been a great steward, they've never interfered in our affair. Can you give us one example. I would ask people, of during the last 20 years when the US government interferes in our affairs. So the community decided we're gonna do this way, give me one example where the Americans have said no, go this way. It never happened in fairness to the American governments.

Having said that the symbol of an American contract with ICANN was politically unsustainable. So it had to end. But the assurance you have to give is that if it ends, ICANN has accountability and to whom now. Right, so this was the delicate thing we had to create and it took us many months. And we actually at many times thought we will fail. Whether it's because the US government became a little bit nervous about what will happen if they step out of the roof and out of their stewardship role, or because some governments were very insistent that role of ICANN is so strategic that governments had to control it, not all the stakeholders to get.

23:15

Then we have to overcome these too. And that took an enormous amount of what I called high integrity engagement, high integrity engagement. This is engagement that is open, that is transparent, that is not political but rather honest about issues. And we did that for many many months until **we road to succeed.** —(??)

Both the US government ended—(??) its unique relationship and other governments starting with Brazil., in April 2014, I convinced President Rousseff to stand up at Sao Paulo announces the Netmundial meeting that she supports the multi stakeholder approach and ICANN can manage them. Then we followed a few months later with Minister Lu Wei of China who came to the ICANN meeting and made the historic announcement, that China wants one internet for the world. And that he supports ICANN institution to manage that. Then Prime Minister Moby was voted in office and I went and met with his team and he sent his minister, the honorable Minister Shankar Prasad to the ICANN meeting and **signed it and** —(??) did the same thing, so we were able to garner from the highest level of countries support for an independent ICANN.

24:45

BZ: After your millions of kilometers and you know a long stun flying. You eventually worked things out, so what year you are thinking maybe ICANN is pulled everything under control and survived Edward Snowden`s you know...

FC: it is done it's done, so on September 30th of 2016, at midnight, the US contract ended. If anything was going to go immediately wrong, it would have happened since then. Because it's been almost a year now, will be a year. The reality is, the model we left now is quite stable. And it works, it is producing policies, it is serving the people it's supposed to serve. And what better proof do we have, to the world that something's working then it's delivering, you know, it's delivering the value it supposed to deliver and most governments seem quite calm and satisfied. Of course, When I started ICANN, we had very small number of governments were actively

participated in, today we have, you know, I think over a hundred sixty governments participated in ICANN, and active in.

26:01

BZ: I noticed when you run the company, when you say you take up the leadership role, you mentioned you particular word integrity...

FC: yes

BZ: So that help you work out of this or outlying these hurdles and overcome this kind of barriers of breach things up

FC: Yes, I'll tell you something. The founders of the internet. When you get to meet them. And luckily there still alive, so many of them you can meet. They're people who have very strong principles. And they believed integrity and transparency, in distributive power not centralized power. They had many principles. We didn't have to write them on a big stone. They just live them. They sure that they are in their own behavior. And when I started I spent time all of them. With as many of them as I could to learn from them. And I believe that the equality of transparency and integrity. And these dealings, was essential to gain the trust of business as well as political interest, take the United States alone, It wasn't clear that the Republican Congress was going to support President Obama's administration decision. So we spent a lot of time. on the hill, met with many congress members and their staffs to build trust, using integrity as our currency. Because we had no other currency other than our work.

27:54

BZ: So after Snowden scam—(??), can you tell us a bit about the last two years you still as ICANN CEO, what else did you do, after you...

FC: The biggest focus after this date which was early 2013 had been to stabilize the political, politicization of the issue. Bring people to cool down and to say what is important. What are the criteria to make sure we keep one internet. What can we do to support these criteria, to do this with governments, to do this with businesses, to do this with civil society, bring everybody to the table and build a platform of trust that ICANN, to build the trust. That's what we did for two year. I, of course as an engineer, I believe that the best way to build trust which is also to deliver things on time and clear, so in better with this I had to run ICANN as a big organization to make sure we are serving our community, we are delivering when we said we will deliver. For the

first time we published in detail, over more than 400 projects of ICANN, how much money is spent on each of them, what is the status of each of them we make everything. Put it out in the transparent space to gain the trust. Trust is not just personal relationships, trust is what you do and how you do it and so it wasn't about my integrity or teams integrity at one desk, what one this is building trust through hard work honest work and delivering on what you say, then people trust you. And that's what we did. And the results are there, I mean I just met one of the ICANN leaders coming up here. You saw me speaking with him and **Mr. Peak**—(??) was telling me, he says, Fadi, things are remarkably smooth and everything is working fine, people are working well, there are no major issue, things are stable, that`s great great place to be.

30:22

BZ: He likes to know on the very day of September 13, the transfer of the ICANN and authorities, September 30, so what's the day?

FC: So it's important to know that, before we got to that point, the community worked very hard to produce the proposal to the American government to end the American government control. That proposal was completed on March 12, 2016. On that day, I thanked the community, took the proposal, gave it to the American government. On that day at 5 PM. I resigned. I left ICANN. Because I had done what I promised to do, which is to get there. Now the US government took the proposal and spent a few months to consume it, to study it, to understand it, to respond to it. I was involved in the background and some questions and clarifications and I did my part. But in general I was not at the helm of ICANN on purpose. Even though, I still had two years in my term. But I decided that, it's important that this accomplishment is not mine. Because it really is not mine. It's not fair for it to be mine, it's everybody's. I stepped out of the picture. So the community can own this independent, success to be, Success to be independent. And so on the 30th, I was with my family at home. And just celebrating that it happened calmly and quickly and **the contract some set**—(??) on that night.

BZ: so the thinking behind your stepping down is like, you like a new chapter starters

FC: yeah yeah, and I need to give, It was important that the credit for this accomplishment is not mine meets every. Because it's in fact wasn't my work alone. There were a lot of people contributed immensely. So by stepping away this

BZ: so you stayed at home watch TV, have a champion in your hand

FC: I did have champion.

BZ: anybody called you

FC: yes I was awakened immediately at five am, the calls started coming in the morning. Because some people thought something may go wrong, let's wait a few hours let's make sure this actually happened. But in the morning I received many calls, from many good people, many Leaders who just wanted to say thank you, to the effort everybody put. And I sent about a hundred Thank you letters and I made posters and I sign them for many people around the world who had worked very hard to make that happened.

33:25

BZ: And you must feel good about yourself.

FC: Well, to be honest I feel very good that, anytime people from different interests, different backgrounds, different motivations can complete something together. I feel very good about that.

BZ: Do you feel that's your highlights of your career or you have more coming at

FC: Well certainly today I do believe that my accomplishments at ICANN are a very big highlight of my career. I'm very proud of that. My favorite thing to do in the world is to build team. That's what I like to do most. These teams could be teams that will build great software. Or they could be teams that will achieve missions like this. Or they could be team at my church that is, you know, we have a team of young people that I have been managing that, buy goats for poor kids in upper Egypt, so they can raise goats and live from. That's also fun too. So it doesn't matter what it is. I think the greatest accomplishment as the French writer said, is to unite men, is to bring people together to do great things together. So any time that's done, it feels great I agree with you, I'm very lucky that I had that opportunity.

35:05

BZ: Alright can you tell us, you know, post ICANN, it's one year since....

FC: so after ICANN the million kilometers per year of travel. I needed to, as another poet says when you're hiking on the mountain very hard; it's good once in a while to get off the mountain because the clearest view of the mountain will be when you're off the mountain, not on the mountain. So I got off my mountain to relax a little bit and I did not take any intense role, I decided to take many small roles. So I can enjoy sometime at reflection, as well as **contribution**—(??) in different spaces. It's good because I was a fellow at Harvard University Kennedy, a fellow at Oxford where I've been working with students, doing seminars and sharing my experience. I have also been an adviser to Professor Klaus Schwab at World Economic Forum where I provide advice on digital matters and digital governance matters. I have come back a little bit to my business world and I'm also an adviser to big private equity firm in the United States where I help them with digital investments. And I have other advisory roles that I do as well. So this has been my year since I left ICANN a year and a few months. It's been wonderful. It's been very good.

BZ: Looks that you never stop. **You know there is Extending like vacation**—(??)

FC: I am very busy I know I can say that I'm less busy than it was at... But the pressures are different It's a time more for reflection rather than execution. In ICANN I was executing every single day, here I am contributing. I'm less of a director, I'm more of an enable coach to others. And I love that, this is a great opportunity to me. Now it is time for me to jump back into the mountain climb again. So I am going to do something soon to get back on.

37:29

BZ: So you have any some big plans, you know jump on wonderful mountains, or just like a hiking.

FC: No no, I do have I do have some big plans but yeah I'm not ready to announce them yet I hope the next couple months I'd be ready for that.

BZ: Is it business related or... ?

FC: both. Mostly I will be continuing my business world but I will also want to continue contributing to the world in some way. I'm continuing to advise professor Schwab of course, because I enjoyed that very much, and he is a wonderful wonderful contributor to making the world a better place. So I continue to do that. I will be with him at his meeting in China in Shenyang, we are leaving shortly. And but I also, you

know, may be involved in other projects as well but my main focus will be largely on the business side in the digital space with one particular focus, **like that to do so**—(??).

38:38

BZ: So all these years, and do you think some people have a little bit misunderstanding about you or they always get you right.

FC: no no, of course not. You know I will tell you something that I have experienced. When I was young, I was taught during the war because I was a child of war in Beirut when I was 13, that sometimes you need to give from yourself unconditionally. Because you don't know if you'll live to tomorrow. So if you have today, the most beautiful form of giving, is to give unconditionally, is to give without asking for anything back. Because during the war it doesn't matter you may not be around to take anything back. So I was trained by, actually by spiritual leaders, to give unconditional and to enjoy that. So in general, when people, not just me, give unconditionally. In general, people don't buy that. They don't seem, why would someone give unconditionally, what's behind it. Why is he doing this. There has to be something. And so I think that this is where people obviously misunderstand you. They say, well, he must be doing this to gain something. All of us sometimes have ulterior goals I am not perfect, nobody is. But there were a lot of times in the last couple of years where, a few years where, I had to clarify that I'm really doing for the public benefit, for the universal benefit. I remember without naming names that I came back from meeting a leader of a country. And another country met me and they said what did you give them. How did they agree to this one. What did you put on the table. And I would say nothing. I told them the truth and I said this is important for the world. And people are incredulous about these things they believe there's always a quid pro quo I don't believe so.

41:08

BZ: Because you are pretty strong believer of the integrity and transparent.

FC: It's the only way.

BZ: You know, sometimes that's my thinking too. In many way, you are sort of at that moment, you are so **horrifying** —(??)people, you don't think it is a reward, sometimes you got reward in different way, you know

FC: yeah and if it doesn't come it doesn't doesn't come. so long as I'm not doing it for the reward.

BZ: That`s right.

FC: Then it's rich. And it's a rich experience for both parties because there are moments in life where unconditional exchange is very powerful.

BZ: I love that. So when you were eighteen year old, to come here, it seems to me more mature than many Americans kids. You know my son was born here and your kids were born here too, how many children do you have?

FC: I have two boys.

BZ: how old are they?

FC: 29 and 27 now.

BZ: So when you were eighteen years old, do you think you are more mature than many other people? How immigrant status were.

FC: Look, at the age of thirteen I was removed from school because of the war. I had to travel far to continue learning, away from my parents. I had to live away from them for years. And I did not live my teenage years and I was largely catapulted into adult about today and you have to stand on your feet. Life takes a different meaning. It doesn't mean it's better. Sometimes I wish I was a child when I was 13,14,15, and I didn`t have to worry about certain things. But certainly there are experiences in life that refine your sense of humanity, your sense of what`s important.

43:06

BZ: Are you the oldest in your family?

FC: I'm the youngest, yeah and I had to come because my brothers are much older than me, six and seven years older than me. And therefore they had to be recruited by the militias. So both my brothers were driving ambulances because my father did not allow us to fight, to use weapons. So both my brothers became ambulances drivers, and so they couldn't leave Lebanon. And so my dad told me at the age of 13, you have to go and help us build a new life somewhere.

BZ: Do you have sisters.

FC: No sisters.

BZ: I mean I want to come back, he likes to know a little bit more about 2012-2013 and you work as the leader in sort of internet governance, period of time in here, what other things in addition to Edward Snowden issues there.

44:22

FC: Look, leave aside Edward Snowden because his revelations did not affect what ICANN is doing. As I said it simply raised the political temperature of the data. That's all he did. But I will tell you what else was important that was happening. It became quite clear during the phase from 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, that the internet was no longer just a tool for technologists and scientists, and children and some ideas; the internet was beginning to become a very very critical global infrastructure. The prediction started to becoming quite significant about the size of the internet to come, which went from nothing to 2016 4 trillion US dollars. Big part of culture, this is not an insignificant. Then it started to becoming clear. That a lot of the internet infrastructure in the way it was built, was not really built with security in mind, quite the opposite, it was built to be open, to be shared.

The priority in designing internet protocol was not to make the internet super secure, it was rather to make internet super open. And these two things started colliding, because then the priorities started shifting with much of the global economy running on the internet. Every aspect of every sector being transformed by the digital space.

46:26

Suddenly, Internet infrastructure became critical. And so it was very very important to leave aside with what happened with Snowden and all that, was very important during this time when the internet and every government in the world was starting to appoint digital ministers and security office and then. As these things started arising, it was very important to ensure that all these leaders around the world in business and in government had trust in the system by which all of this is running.

To me this was the biggest project, yes of course, ending the transition, ending the U. S. stewardship, that's all expressions of trust. But trust had to be rebuilt in the infrastructure, and how the internet works. And we didn't want people to re-question everything, we wanted people to say this is working. And it's delivering value. I loved that part of my job. Because the internet is an incredible tool of good, of course it could be used as a tool for evil, as with everything else. But we had to raise the good

quotient, and the trust quotient. Versus the quotient that break us apart, break internet. That was a big focus of mine.

47:59

And the other thing that I did during my tenure which I love to answer a question, is about the youth. The internet after all was born during this time, the time of youth, the time of young people. So I spent quite a bit of time trying to bring the youth into ICANN. We established the first Youth programs for high school, for college, for various groups and we started bringing the youth into the decision making. So, that was a fantastic thing that I want to see happen. We also established for public responsibility group. People who were working to use the funds ICANN has, for... to serve the communities in which we are working, none of these things can be forgotten and they're very very important to the public good mission of ICANN :

48:55

BZ: So well as a person, who you look up to, sort of like, you know, always give you encouragement, always you know help you, Sort of goes through so many difficulties like your work, like anything...

FC: So in different places there are different people to whom I look for encouragement and guidance and inspiration in many ways. So there are people you look up to who are in public roles and in private roles and they're people you know that you work with them day to day that give you courage. For me, the chairman of ICANN, Dr. Crocker was of immense importance from a leader who inspired me to do what I did in ICANN. And Dr. Crocker, his humility is amazing given what he's done and the things he's contributed to the internet. I still learn from him. He remains a friend of mine. And I go to him when I need guidance. So Dr. Crocker is a great human being and a great contributor, and great engineer that made a lot of this happened. I also look for guidance from people in the political arena who actually de-politicize issue. Mr. Larry Strickling who used to be the head of the US government's office that managed ICANN. What an incredible individual who despite the enormous political pressure stood his ground and finished transition. I have great respect for him and I stay in touch with him as someone that I could learn from. I have also in academia many friends. I must bring up Professor Joseph Nye who used to be the dean of the Kennedy School of government who is my adviser but also my mentor and again incredible values, credible values of doing good at end of the day. So, and many people like that, you know, I don't have, like many of us we have these people who surround us. We are lucky to have them.

51:26

BZ: He wants to know, I mean, how they selected you to be the CEO of ICANN.

FC: Yes it was a process is quite known and open I did not apply, as I said, someone applied my name. So I received a call from ICANN representative, they asked, you know, if I would like to meet with them. So I did meet. They received more than a hundred applications from senior public and private figures around the world inviting them, wishing to have that post. And they go through very strict process of elimination that takes almost a year. So they go from a hundred to, I think the first cut was about thirty, and the second cut was about twelve, and then the third cut was three, three people. So I think it is now known who the three are. Because when they came to me and they said you're one of the three finalists. I said I have other business obligations, so it would be difficult for me to do the job now. Could you please, you know, I will pass. And the Chairman Mr. Crocker, Dr. Crocker came back and he said, no no, Fadi, we really need you to do this. You are our top applicant and we want you to take the job. So I accepted with some delay, that's why they put an interim CEO for a few months. And then when I started. My first question was who are number two and number three. And... I met them and I hired them, they're still at ICANN, both of them. So I immediately brought them on board because I told the board, every CEO should have a succession plan. And so by hiring these two, I have the natural immediate succession plan you already selected them, from a hundred people. And they're both wonderful wonderful partners and I worked with them closely and they're still at ICANN, contributing and providing a lot of value to ICANN.

53:50

BZ: That's also make your life easier.

FC: It did, because they are great people and if the board had felt that they are good contributors, and they are... I think I mean frankly I don't know why I was picked ahead of them because they are both wonderful contributors.

BZ: Thank you very much.

FC: With great really great pleasure.

BZ: But before we let you go. I want to give you one more thing

FC: sure

BZ: do I miss anything about you as a person so you once I get, this is not just talking to us, you are talking to...

FC: I will tell you one thing that is important. Have you seen that the picture that I had a commission when I was at ICANN describing the layers of internet governance? The three layers?

BZ: Yes.

54:49

FC: So, of course, the middle layer is ICANN and its partners. The lower layer is the networks. I think it's very important appreciate that, right now the world needs a system of cooperation to address the top layer. We don't have that in place. We need a new system to manage the digital world above ICANN. Above ICANN. And that system needs to be designed and needs to be implemented. Because today, there are no clear mechanisms, no clear solutions to, how are we going to address issues like, you know, nonproliferation of cyber warfare; How are we going to address issues like, fair digital trade; How are we going to address issues like, protecting children on the internet; How are we going to address issues like, ethical frameworks for the use of artificial intelligence data; How are we going to make IUT devices safer. So we don't go from twenty some billion to X. trillion devices connected to the internet without safety requirements. Basic software hygiene and harder hygiene and I can go on, the list is long. Question is where do businesses and governments and civil society come together to address these issues. And how? What is the process to do that. This is something that is of urgent importance to the world right now.

56:43

There are some good works and ideas and discussions in many places. I don't think it's clear yet, what will be that... What will be the model or the system of cooperation in that space. To me that is the crux, that is the pivotal issue to be solved. So that, this largely digital century, is also a safe century, is also a prosperous century, is also century with equality between people, not division and disparity. And the digital revolution I think can help with all these issues. But it can also create problems. If we do not have mechanism of agreeing. Even the Microsoft president a month ago issued a very powerful blog, in which Mr. Smith said, it is time for some conventions, it is time for some rules for the road. This is not about closing the internet or regulating the internet. This is about basic rules for the road. You know, we all drive cars and if you arrive to England and just to drive the car on the right side of the road, you're going to

cause a mess. There are rules you follow the rules and it's ok. We need to think globally and transnationally. But also start acting nationally and locally, so that digital space is a safe space is prosperous space for everyone. I think that's really the challenge of the future.

BZ: I really appreciate that. Thank you so much

FC: with great pleasure. I'm glad we met.

BZ: you know, you are a thinker, not just a leader. Okay sounds good, you know, hopefully we'll be in touch soon.

FC: if you need help or proper—(??) or something, I'd happy to

BZ: Yeah thank you very much for your time.

FC: Good luck with your project

BZ: alright, thank you.