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Note from the Chair for the Steering Group Meeting on 6 September 2023

Dear colleagues,

I am looking forward to our meeting on 6 September. The Annual Conference in Barcelona is approaching fast, planning is well on track and, as every year, there are several topics that need to be addressed before the event, which will mark the transition from the ICN year 2022/23 to the new ICN year 2023/24.

ICN SG and Working Group leadership

At the Annual Conference the new Working Group leaders will be presented to the ICN membership and, given that this is an odd-numbered year, the new Steering Group will be confirmed. I will provide an update on the status of the discussion on ICN leadership positions, including the Working Group rotation process. With regard to Working Group leaders, the process is a bit more difficult this time. The simple reason is that there are more agencies willing to actively contribute and take on leadership positions, which is a very good thing. Based on the 3D feedback, I would like to discuss with you the possibility of increasing the number of Co-Chair positions within the Working Groups to accommodate the wish of an increasing number of agencies to become even more involved in the ICN's work.

Annual Conferences

Preparations are well underway for the ICN Annual Conference, which will be held in Barcelona from 18 to 20 October 2023. The Spanish CNMC will present an update on the planning. We will also hear from the ICN Vice Chairs about the Head of Agency sessions, one focussing on AI, the other on sustainability. I am also pleased to see that the organisation of the next Annual Conferences is already in full swing as well: CADE will present an update on the 2024 Annual Conference in Brazil and the CMA will inform the SG about the date of the 2025 Annual Conference in the UK.

ICN projects

During our in-person meeting in Paris, we discussed a possible project on competition concerns in agriculture and food markets, with a focus on the needs of developing countries. Next week we will continue this discussion on the basis of a short note circulated in advance of our meeting. The next step will be a break-out session at the upcoming Annual Conference. The Intersection Project team has drafted a handbook on the intersection of competition, data and privacy, which will be finalised after the conference based on the plenary session and the break-out session.

Open ICN Programme and Focus Group

The Third Decade consultations have shown that the ICN should ensure that all members are given plenty of opportunities to participate in the network and are made aware of these opportunities. To implement the 3D recommendations, we have introduced the ICN Check-In to facilitate communication and to allow direct feedback, and we have created the Focus Group to provide a resource-light way for interested members to participate in and access the ICN's ongoing work. COFECE, which is also leading the successful Bridging Project with the aim of bringing together younger and more mature agencies, will host the first Focus Group call in September and provide a preview of what is planned.

Work Products

Several Working Group work products have been or are about to be finalised and will be presented at the Annual Conference. Next week, the Advocacy Working Group will present the toolkit on optimising advocacy to enhance international cooperation towards more effective enforcement for SG approval. The ICN Secretariat will then provide an overview of the work products to be approved by the SG at the next SG meeting on 27 September.

OECD and UNCTAD

Finally, we will hear an update from Commissioner Reiko Aoki, our new ICN/OECD Liaison, and the ICN/UNCTAD Liaison will report back from the 22nd session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy, which took place in July. I am very grateful to Renato Ferrandi for taking on this position on an interim basis. At our meeting, I will invite SG members to express their interest in this position.

Best wishes,

Andreas Mundt