Summary of Conclusions Reached at the 7th WG/IG Chairs Meeting: Gothenburg, June 2017

(V1 Lannom 12 July 2017)

The 12-14 June 2017 RDA Chairs’ meeting held in Gothenburg was the first to be extended to two full days spread over three as opposed to one full day spread over two. There were 36 registrants with an average of 20-25 people in the room at any one time. It was also the first of these meetings at which it was agreed that, in addition to posted notes and presentations, any broadly agreed conclusions should be written up and presented to the full Chairs list as well as the full TAB, followed as appropriate with a presentation to Council. This document is the first draft of those conclusions.

There was a great deal of discussion and, as usual, not all were in agreement on every topic. There were two presentations at the end that made recommendations for RDA future actions and the topic of ‘gaps’ was generally addressed throughout. What is missing? What is next? The presentations, one from Peter Wittenburg

<https://www.rd-alliance.org/sites/default/files/PW-summary-points.pptx>

and one from Bob Hanisch

<https://www.rd-alliance.org/sites/default/files/RDA%20Future_KJ_RK_RH_0.docx>

are on the RDA web site for the meeting and are open to all.

What follows is not the sum of those, but my subjective evaluation of those points, both from the two presentations and from the meeting in general, on which there was something approaching consensus.

1. The start-up phase of RDA is over. Non-controversial and generally acknowledged throughout the organization. What this means for the organization and what steps need to be taken next are both less clear, but there seems to be agreement that the current all-volunteer approach has reached its limits in several areas, as shown in points 2 and 3 below.
2. RDA needs more professional staff. Secretariat is under resourced and the SecGen position needs to be more a leadership/promotional activity than an administrative position. This would, of course, require more funding, the sources of which are unknown.
3. RDA progress and future direction should be made more explicit through an annual Road-mapping exercise, developed in coordination between TAB and the Chairs, with feedback solicited from OAB and Council. No one underestimates the work involved in such an exercise but it was seen at this meeting as an important step and, further, that the next version of this meeting work on such a Roadmap directly, either adding to work begun by TAB or by initiating the work, perhaps starting with a defined subset. It may not be possible to do this with purely volunteer effort, which raises once again the idea of bringing on more staff, requiring more funding. The hired staff would not, in and of itself, set the priorities but would assist any Chairs/TAB efforts in that direction.
4. All RDA bodies should make public their meeting minutes. Sensitive information need not be made public, of course, but the default position should be transparency whenever possible.

Other Recommendations: The following recommendations were advanced and received varying levels of support, but I did not detect consensus. Details in the above referenced recommendation documents.

1. RDA needs improved branding – something more specific than ‘building bridges’ and less specific that the individual recommendations. What are the key messages?
2. RDA should adopt the recommendation process developed by the W3C.
3. WGs and IGs should work without specific time limits, except that groups inactive after three plenaries become dormant.
4. Adopt a new simple criterion for IG formation: within RDA scope and not redundant with existing activities*.* This should reduce load on TAB.
5. Remove any restriction on the number of co-chairs.
6. Future TAB members should have home organization’s commitment of ~10-20% of time.