

ITU – Open Consultation - Developmental Aspects of the Internet

ICANN Contribution

"Considering the importance of Internet to the global digital economy, all stakeholders are invited to submit their comments on the following key aspects:

1. What are the developmental aspects of the Internet (for example, economic, social, regulatory and technical aspects), especially for developing countries?
2. How can governments and other stakeholders promote the developmental aspects of the Internet?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities?"

Summary

ICANN is pleased and privileged to take part in this important ITU consultation. We particularly look forward to the open dialogue on these issues with a thorough debate during the "Open Consultation" meeting in early February. We hope the latter will explore the role both the ITU and others can play in the crucial developmental aspects.

While ICANN plays a relatively minor role in the overall Internet Policy Ecosystem we do, through our work on the Domain Name System, contribute to the on-going development and global reach of the Internet. In line with our own Mission (which touches on the need for a single and interoperable DNS) we believe it imperative for development that the ITU does everything within its power and remit to secure an open and singular Internet, allowing everyone to share the benefits such access brings.

ICANN, following the important IANA Transition (where certain key responsibilities for maintaining the integrity of the DNS were transferred from the US Administration to the global Internet Ecosystem) will continue to work with stakeholders in increasing choice and diversity in the Domain Name System as well as well as in providing top-level international domain names (IDNs) in local languages.

In addressing the questions posed, ICANN will naturally focus on its own remit and locus, though we would note that the work to address the challenges posed will naturally involve all stakeholders, including of course governments from the developed and developing world. As ICANN has experienced, in dealing with complex issues such as the IANA Transition, success is only possible when all the different actors with a stake in the issue come together. On the issue of ICT development, especially that concerning Internet and DNS deployment, therefore, one needs the donor governments and stakeholders to ensure the environment (for example concerning policy and regulation) is conducive for ongoing investment and deployment.

Detail

ICANN and Development of Internet

ICANN is a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with participants from all over the world dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable. It promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet's unique identifiers. Through its coordination role of the Internet's naming system, it does, along with many other entities and organisations (both public and private) have an important impact on the expansion and evolution of the Internet.

Specifically within ICANN; we have employees located in many developing countries within our Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE) Team whom, inter-alia, are responsible for different forms of development work with respect to the DNS, including enhancing its security and availability.

We have, with a keen eye on further development of the Internet established two DNS Entrepreneurship Centres, in Cairo, Egypt and in Asuncion in Paraguay. The objectives of these projects is to contribute to the evolution of the Internet ecosystem in Africa and the Middle East by building a network of experts in both regions in the DNS technical, policy, business, and legal areas, thus fostering the evolution of a robust and healthy domain name marketplace in these Regions, as well as providing an entrepreneurial platform, for business development, collaboration and knowledge exchange.

ICANN also has a Development and Public Responsibility Department (DPRD) which has established new programs that respond to Community and Regional needs. In addition we have, along with other organizations, a public responsibility to ensure that the Internet governance ecosystem is representative, transparent, and accountable, and that it evolves in such a way that promotes these three qualities.

ICANN will continue to evolve and enhance its technical role, and thus helping ensure the stability of the DNS. ICANN recognizes that one single and frictionless Internet is important for all development across the globe.

International Domain Names (IDNs)

Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) are domain names represented by characters other than the traditional ASCII characters; thus they typically contain letters or characters from non-Latin scripts (for example, Arabic or Chinese).

ICANN in recognising the importance of linguistic diversity to the growth of the Internet is keen to see the deployment of top-level domain names in non-Latin scripts.

There are essentially two types of IDNs; those in relation to Country Code TLDs, the first to be introduced by ICANN, and those in relation to generic names. A brief overview of both is given by the footnoted info-graphic¹.

The new gTLD Programme allows for an increased number of generic top-level domains in any language; such as extensions in Arabic, Chinese or Cyrillic scripts. There are currently over 100 of these new gTLDs delegated into the root of the Internet.

In relation to Country Code TLDs (ccTLDs), the Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) ccTLD Fast Track Process was approved by the ICANN Board at its annual meeting in Seoul in October 2009, enabling countries and territories to submit requests to ICANA specific set of technical requirements must be met..

As a result 36 countries/territories (represented by 46 IDN ccTLDs) are delegated in the DNS root zone, with the remainder either readying to apply, or actively applying for delegation of the string.

<https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/fast-track-2012-02-25-en>.

ICANN will continue to accept new string evaluation requests for non-Latin country-code top-level domains for countries and territories.

The “new” gTLD Programme, Reviews and a subsequent process

In May last year ICANN celebrated an exciting milestone in the evolution of the domain name system with more than 1,000 new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) from the 2012 Application Round having been introduced into the root of the Internet. This expansion is contributing to choice, competition and innovation in the domain name industry.

The expansion of the domain name system to more than 1,000 gTLDs signifies greater diversity in how people and businesses can represent themselves online. It enables

¹ <https://www.icann.org/sites/default/files/assets/idn-access-domain-names-03sep15-en.pdf>

communities; cities and brands to more closely align their digital and real-world identities. It's also helping to redefine the Internet experience for people across the globe by introducing internationalized generic top-level domains for the first time. These users can now navigate within internationalized gTLDs and consume content entirely in local writing systems, or scripts.

In addition to providing consumers with greater choice, new gTLDs are enhancing competition in the domain name industry. The opportunity to manage a piece of online real estate inspired individuals and organizations to start new companies, while existing registry operators sought to expand their product lines. This can and should happen on a global basis, encouraging, for example, new innovators from developing countries to start business.

This has increased consumer choice and encouraged some entities to have a presence on the Internet for the first time.

During 2016 a number of Reviews were initiated to assess the impact of this significant expansion of the generic domain name space, not least to look at the economic impact and to assess how competition, consumer choice and trust have been affected.

The Competition, Consumer Trust and Consumer Choice Review (CCT)² was initiated this year and will report later in 2017. In addition there is also a review looking at the affect of the new gTLDs on Rights Protection and whether the current mechanisms appropriately protect rights holders.

A Community led Policy Development Process (PDP)³ on "New gTLD Subsequent Procedures" has also been initiated to develop policy concerning the potential introduction of more gTLD names. This will take account of the Reviews noted above and other views and opinions concerning any new process. Any further application process is not expected until at least 2018.

The challenge is to ensure that any further expansion of the generic domain name space has geographical diversity and reflects the global nature of the Internet.

Challenges Ahead for ICT Development

² <https://www.icann.org/resources/reviews/specific-reviews/cct>

³ <https://gnso.icann.org/en/group-activities/active/new-gtld-subsequent-procedures>

The importance of development and the opportunities afforded by having enhanced global connectivity and access to Internet services is immense as has been widely documented. The Internet is not, of course a panacea in itself but the innovative and socially and economic beneficial services that can run on it can benefit all societies, whatever their state of development.

As noted above, however, an equal challenge to actually providing access and connectivity is maintaining it so that services can be provided in an affordable way with content attractive for the user. The availability of domain names in local language (as referenced earlier) is part of the solution but there are of course many other factors as well. The governance of the Internet resources and the way they are deployed is critical. Involvement of all stakeholders in the process of providing and setting standards and policies for the delivery of services has been seen to be beneficial compared to top-down approaches. Whether it is the management of the country code domain or the determination of cybersecurity standards, better and more informed decisions are made through multi-stakeholder approaches.

Global organisations, such as the ITU, UNESCO and UNCTAD have, along with other actors have, important roles to play in helping frame the policies and standards that will enhance the emergence of services and applications. A conducive and attractive ICT platform will encourage initiative and locally relevant services to be provided, without which infrastructure will be under-utilized and prohibitive in cost.

Conclusion

With the importance of the developmental agenda recognised by the UN through the 2030 Sustainable Developmental Agenda, and with respect to the contribution of ICTs and the Internet through the Outcome Document of the UN General Assembly 2015 WSIS Review, it is beholden on all stakeholders to put appropriate measures in place. The time for talking is over.

To be completed