Universal Acceptance World Café

Key Outcomes, Action Items & Progress Indicators

ICANN84 Discussion Summary

What We Discovered

The Universal Acceptance conversations at ICANN84 revealed something crucial: getting the internet to work in everyone's language isn't just a technical challenge. It's a coordination puzzle that needs three things working together—policy push from governments, educational infrastructure that builds real capacity, and smart strategic leverage at the right pressure points.

Think of it like building a bridge. You need solid foundations on both riverbanks AND someone willing to fund the construction. Policy, capacity building, and technical adoption are those three essential pieces.

Policy Leverage: Government as the Catalyst

The Core Strategy

Government procurement is a sleeping giant. When a government says "we only buy software that handles Arabic email addresses," tech companies suddenly have a business reason to care. It's not about asking nicely—it's about creating real consequences for non-compliance.

Three policy pillars emerged from the discussions:

- **Mandate government officials to use IDN emails and domains** (leading by example)
- **Make UA compliance mandatory in procurement** (using buying power)
- **Set actual deadlines with monitoring** (because accountability matters)

Policy in Action: The Morocco Example

Imagine Morocco announces that within 24 months, all government websites must have both ASCII and Arabic domain names. They require any software purchased through procurement to demonstrate UA compliance.

This creates immediate market pressure. Microsoft, Google, and local vendors need to ensure their products work with Arabic characters or lose government contracts. The Moroccan ccTLD (.ma) provides technical guidance. The Ministry of Digital Affairs tracks progress quarterly.

Within a year, private companies start following suit because their government clients demand it. Banks enable Arabic email registration. E-commerce sites fix their forms. The policy created a ripple effect far beyond government.

Capacity Building: Education as Infrastructure

The Academic Pipeline

The capacity building discussion revealed a strategic sequence: start with academia, filter upward to legislators. Computer science departments teaching 500 engineering students

about IDN implementation affects thousands of future websites. Those graduates then work in government and industry, building UA-ready systems naturally.

But there's a catch—professors need accessible training materials. The suggestion: make ICANN certification available to educators as an incentive. When universities can advertise "our graduates are UA-certified," both students and employers benefit.

The Cultural Hook

One of the cleverer arguments: tap into national pride and cultural identity. Catalonia's .cat domain—restricted to Catalan language use—shows how UA becomes about heritage preservation. When you frame it as "use your language online," ministries of culture and education get interested alongside the tech folks.

Capacity Building in Action: Thailand Example

Thailand's Ministry of Digital Economy partners with Chulalongkorn University to integrate UA training into computer science curriculum. Students learn to build applications that handle Thai script properly. The university offers free workshops for government IT staff.

Meanwhile, the Thai Network Information Center creates simple testing tools for developers. The government runs social media campaigns featuring Thai celebrities using Thai-script email addresses. Within two years, Thai startups routinely build UA-ready apps because that's the norm graduates expect.

Technical Adoption: Standards and Real-World Testing

The Foundation Challenge

The technical discussion kept circling back to "grey areas"—places where UA guidance is ambiguous. This creates interoperability nightmares. A system working perfectly in Morocco might fail when communicating with Tunisia because they implemented standards slightly differently.

The solution: align national standards with international ones obsessively. It's not bureaucratic box-checking—it's ensuring email actually crosses borders.

The Bilateral Opportunity

Here's the chicken-and-egg problem: big tech won't prioritize UA without market demand, but markets won't demand it without awareness. The breakthrough reframe: use bilateral relationships. If two trading partners both require UA, vendors serving those markets must comply. It creates business necessity.

Technical Adoption in Action: Singapore-Malaysia Example

Singapore and Malaysia, close trading partners, coordinate UA requirements. Both mandate that government systems must handle email addresses in Malay, Chinese, and Tamil scripts. Software vendors serving both markets must comply or lose contracts.

Microsoft and SAP update their products to meet these requirements. Small businesses in both countries benefit because enterprise software now handles their languages. Other ASEAN countries notice the success and consider similar coordination.

Action Items at a Glance

Here's what needs to happen, organized by timeline and responsibility:

Timeline	Action Item	Success Indicator
0-3 months	**Create clear UA definition document** Simple explanation (under 20 pages) of what UA is, why it matters, standards to follow	1,000+ downloads; cited in 3+ government policies
	Develop motivation toolkit 5-10 compelling use cases showing real-world impact	80% of officials can explain UA after reading
	Draft model procurement language Ready-to-use policy text for government RFPs	Adopted by 2+ countries in adapted form
3-6 months	**Establish government task forces** 2-3 pilot countries with budgets and monitoring authority	Task forces meeting quarterly; progress reports published
	Create simplified implementation roadmap Step-by-step guides for the four technical pillars	Roadmap rated 4/5+ helpful by users
	Launch pilot implementations Document everything: problems, solutions, timelines, costs	Comprehensive case study (30-50 pages) completed
6-24 months	**Engage software licensing organizations** Incorporate UA compliance into certification standards	1+ licensing body formally adopts UA requirements
	Activate bilateral relationships Coordinate UA requirements between trading partners	Country pairs with synchronized UA mandates
	Align national with international standards Ensure interoperability through standards coordination	95%+ success rate on cross-border interoperability tests
	Launch UA tools website Central hub with testing tools, guides, case studies	1,000+ monthly visitors; 80% find it helpful

How We'll Know It's Working

Quick Wins (3-6 months)

- Definition document downloaded 1,000+ times and cited in government policies
- Model procurement language adopted by at least 2 countries
- At least 2 pilot countries with functioning task forces
- Tools website launched with 1,000 monthly visitors

Medium-Term Progress (6-12 months)

- 80% of government officials can explain UA after reading materials
- At least 5 countries using procurement language to require UA compliance
- Measurable increase in UA-ready domain registrations (year-over-year growth)
- First licensing organization formally adopts UA requirements

Long-Term Success (12-24 months)

- At least one pilot country declares "UA-ready" (70%+ systems compliant)
- Double the number of UA-ready systems from baseline
- At least 10 countries with active UA policies and functioning task forces
- Second wave of countries implementing based on pilot learnings

What to Explore Next

For Policymakers

Investigate partnerships between technical ministries and cultural/language departments. There's untapped potential in framing UA as heritage preservation and minority language rights, not just technical compliance.

Examine the China case study in detail—what exactly did their policy documents specify? How did implementation cascade from government to business? What were the timelines and budgets?

For Technical Community

Compile best practices from successful implementations into accessible guides. Not academic papers—practical documentation with before/after metrics that non-technical people can understand.

Develop testing protocols and validation tools that make UA compliance objectively measurable. If you can't test it, procurement requirements become meaningless.

For Educators

Check whether ICANN's UA curriculum materials are accessible to your institution. What would motivate adoption in computer science programs? Industry partnerships? Professional certifications?

Consider how UA could be framed as a diversity, equity, and inclusion issue in tech education. Students interested in social impact might engage more deeply when they understand UA as enabling internet access for marginalized language communities.

For Civil Society

Document stories of people excluded from digital services because of language barriers. These narratives make the abstract concrete and give policymakers compelling reasons to act.

Coordinate with minority language communities who could be early adopters and advocates. Their lived experience creates urgency that technical arguments alone cannot.

The Path Forward

Universal Acceptance isn't primarily a technical challenge anymore—the standards exist and the solutions are known. It's a coordination and motivation challenge requiring policy frameworks that create real incentives, educational infrastructure that builds capacity at scale, and strategic leverage at chokepoints where change ripples outward.

The most promising insight from these discussions: use government procurement power to create market pressure, embed UA training in computer science education to ensure future systems are built right, and coordinate between trading partners to make compliance a competitive necessity.

Success looks like someone in Guatemala naturally registering a Spanish-language domain, someone in Thailand confidently using a Thai-script email address, and systems everywhere just handling it correctly. Not because anyone forced perfection overnight, but because smart policies, strategic leverage, and steady capacity building made it inevitable.