

Joint AFRALO-AfrICANN Meeting  
ICANN69 Virtual Annual General Meeting  
Wednesday, 14 October 2020

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Universal Acceptance Project  
Statement  
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**Topic: Status, Impact and recommendations for Universal Acceptance (UA) in Africa**

We, the African ICANN community members participating in the ICANN69 Virtual Annual General Meeting and attending the Joint AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting on Wednesday, 14 October 2020, in consultation with the wider AFRALO-AfrICANN community, addressed the concerns of Universal Acceptance (UA) project with special focus on status and impact on the African continent.

Africa<sup>1</sup> is considered the second largest populated region and home to about 2,000 indigenous languages, with a population of more than 1.3 billion<sup>2</sup> people who belong to different native tribes, ethnicity, and over 2% population yearly change.

Universal Acceptance is a foundational requirement for a truly multilingual Internet, to empower the local language digital content with the new added local initiatives and contributions.

Most African citizens are not native English speakers and as such language can be considered as one of the main barriers to connecting the unconnected. ICANN is promoting the use of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and Email Address Internationalization (EAI) in parallel with pushing for the new Generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs). Most email and web resources still use Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), that are not universally accessible.

We also agree and believe that all Internet enabled applications should be able to accept, validate, store, process and display all domain names and email addresses in whatever language script that is used locally. Universal Acceptance will help Africans to be able to use indigenous language scripts for IDNs or email addresses to connect as well as being a part of the end users benefiting from Internet-related opportunities such as the new gTLD program.

To enhance the adoption of Universal Acceptance in Africa, we recommend the following:

**1. That ICANN**

- a. Encourages African Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) members to be part of the GAC Working Group on IDNs and UA as well as discuss:

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<sup>1</sup> Africa Population <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/>

<sup>2</sup> The top 10 most Spoken Languages in Africa in 2020  
<https://www.africanexponent.com/post/7257-most-spoken-languages-in-africa-2020>

- i. IDN Country Code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) adoption to serve a population that has language barriers from being connected or served online.
  - ii. Required national policies and industry-led measures to drive the wheel for UA readiness adoption, implementation and use.
  - iii. National Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for adopting UA readiness and keep the applications interoperable.
  - iv. Inclusion of UA readiness within national digital inclusion projects.
- b. Encourages African ICANN community members to join other groups working on Internationalization and Universal Acceptance outside ICANN for knowledge exchange and experience sharing.
- c. Addresses and promotes the use of local language domain names to access local language content and use local language email addresses to exchange data, through fostering the use of IDNs and EAls.
- d. Encourages African communities to work on enriching online content in African languages.

## **2. That the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG)**

- a. Conducts a study about the roles of different stakeholder groups such as Internet end-users, software developers and providers, ccTLD operators, registrars, email service operators, technical and academic communities, governments, private sector, tech-media, etc., to further promote IDNs, EAls and UA.
- b. Supports African organizations and educational institutions that work in the field of domain names or email addresses to:
  - i. Develop and identify the UA issues inventory and how to mitigate them.
  - ii. Develop a widespread awareness plan about the importance of having an online presence, whether using new gTLDs or using their own local languages
  - iii. Conduct hands-on workshops on how to adopt UA readiness, adopting EAls and using IDN ccTLDs
- c. Encourages UA local/regional initiatives and more cooperation with the ICANN Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE) team to support the progress of IDN, EAI and UA technologies.
- d. Engages African open source communities and other groups of developers promoting UA projects to start the adoption of new API versions and updating the current ones.

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- e. Support local training initiatives on “UA Technologies, Internationalized Domain Names, and Email Address Internationalization”.
- f. Support curriculum development initiatives tailored towards creating UA awareness at universities and related educational institutions in Africa.

### 3. That Stakeholders

- a. Encourage other stakeholders, and particularly coordinate efforts with the private sector, technical and academic communities, tech-media industry and governments to get their first step towards UA readiness by developing the repository systems and
  - i. Publish the UA Readiness adoption policy,
  - ii. Identifying the applications that should be UA ready,
  - iii. Modify the current systems to be UA ready,
  - iv. Require that new developed applications and systems are UA ready, and
  - v. Provide guidelines and toolkits for how to make applications UA ready.

We want to thank all those who are working hard to push the Universal Acceptance project forward . We hope that these recommendations will be taken into account to make significant progress for better development of the UA initiatives in Africa.

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