

Joint AFRALO-AfrICANN Meeting ICANN72 Virtual Meeting

Tuesday 26 October from UTC

Statement

TOPIC : DATA SECURITY

We, the African ICANN Community members participating in the Virtual ICANN 72 AGM and attending the joint AFRALO/AfrICANN meeting, discussed Data Security as an important topic for AFRALO. We hereby put forward the African position in relation to Data Security as it relates to ICANN. The discussion was prompted by the majority of AFRALO members following a request on the AFRALO mailing list for topics to be discussed at ICANN72. We subsequently organised a capacity building webinar on Data Security that was facilitated by ICANN Staff.

Data Security is a set of processes and practices designed to protect critical information technology (IT) ecosystems. Data Security and privacy are the biggest challenges of the information age. Examples of such challenges include ransomware attacks that we have seen make headlines in African newspapers. Just this past month, South Africa's department of justice faced a massive ransomware attack. The African community explicitly has the subject of Data Security as a high priority on the agenda of all stakeholders.

In the context of ICANN, Data Security is multifaceted, it includes the security and integrity of the Internet naming system, the security of registrants' data and the security of users' data as it relates to the Domain Name System (DNS). The ICANN community addresses those Data Security aspects through practices and policies, which the AfrICANN community is in full support of.

Ensuring the security and integrity of DNS data is crucial to the security and stability of the Internet. The DNS can be used as a tool to perpetuate abusive actions, risking the security of Internet users' data, victimizing many of them and reducing their trust in the Internet. As the security of DNS data has a direct impact on the security of users online it subsequently also has a direct impact on registries and registrars' businesses. Accordingly, prevention and mitigation of all forms of DNS abuse that alter or make use of DNS data to victimize millions should be of high priority to the entire ICANN community. Technical methods to protect the integrity of DNS data include deploying DNSSEC, which strengthens DNS security by using digital signatures. However, DNSSEC is not widely deployed. Resolving methods such as DNS over HTTPs (DoH) and DNS over TLS (DoT), which are both based on transport layer security and encryption, also improve privacy and security of users. Moreover, ICANN policies are also affected by the issue of Data Security, examples include the new round of gTLDs, registration data directory services formerly known as WHOIS and Domain Name transfer policies. Moving forward with a new round of gTLDs without addressing issues

pertaining to Data security, will only lead to an increase in malicious actions affecting the entire Internet community.

To address the issue of registrants' data security and following the enactment of the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the community developed a new policy for gTLD registration data. However, despite the fact that the policy protects registrant's data, it does not effectively enable disclosure of data for the purpose of protecting the Internet community. In addition, registrant's data security remains a concern as it pertains to domain name transfer policy, particularly in relation to the authentication code sent to registrant.

In analyzing domain name security practices, we note that registry locks are currently used to prevent domain name hijacking and unauthorized changes to the DNS. Without such a lock, threats could take a website offline or redirect users to malicious content. Many domains might be unlocked currently as not every registrar offers this service. AFRALO hereby recommends that registrars should be required to offer domain lock services as a data security measure for domain names. A registry lock policy standard could prevent domain transfers initiated by registrars.

To that end AFRALO recommends to ICANN and the community to

- encourage deployment of DNSSEC and other good security practices to ensure the integrity and security of DNS data
- address issues pertaining to data security and DNS abuse before moving forward with a new gTLD round
- regard prevention and mitigation of all forms of DNS abuse as a high priority to the entire ICANN community
- find the right balance between registrants' data privacy and protection and protecting Internet end users' data
- require registrars to offer domain lock services as a data security measure for domain names.

Furthermore the AFRALO community urges Internet end users to take measures to protect their data through practices that include:

- Using e-mail data protection tools and data loss protection tools to detect any suspicious activities.
- Protecting stored data by making it unusable and unreadable, this would keep information safe in the event that data is stolen.
- Protecting the data when it is being distributed through password protection and encryption, as well as distribution through secure channels.
- Minimising devices which hold data by allowing file access only on secured platforms. Use data only for tasks that require the data, and give selective access.
- Enhancing data use monitoring through digital watermarking and checking data movement through the network.

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