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AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ALAC Statement on the Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) Variant Issues Project (VIP) Proposed Project Plan for Next Steps

Introduction
By the Staff of ICANN

Rinalia Abdul Rahim, At-Large Advisory Committee member (ALAC) from the Asian, Australasian and Pacific Islands Regional At-Large Organization (APRALO) and member of the ALAC Executive Committee, originally composed a draft of this Statement after extensive discussion of the topic:

- Within the At-Large Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) Working Group before the ICANN Costa Rica meeting;
- In a meeting of the At-Large IDN working group with the Variants Issues Project (VIP) Team at the 43rd ICANN Public Meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica meeting; and
- On several At-Large conference calls both before and after the 43rd ICANN Public Meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica meeting.

On 11 April 2012, a draft of the Statement was posted on the *At-Large IDN Variant Issues Project – Proposed Project Plan for Next Steps Workspace*. On that same day, Olivier Crépin-Leblond, Chair of the ALAC, requested At-Large Staff to send a seven-day Call for Comments on the draft Statement to all At-Large members via the ALAC-Announce Mailing List.

On 19 April 2012, the Chair of the ALAC requested that Staff open a five-day ALAC ratification vote on the Statement.

On 27 April 2012, At-Large Staff confirmed that the online vote resulted in the ALAC endorsing the Statement with 13 votes in favor, 0 votes against, and 0 abstentions. You may review the result independently under:

https://www.bigpulse.com/pollresults?code=2380DABIxjwb9L3BJ5x2YYhZ

[End of Introduction]

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Acknowledgment of the VIP Team Achievement

The ALAC congratulates the IDN Variant Issues Project (VIP) team upon the successful completion of the case study reports and the final integrated report. We also wish to record our appreciation for the outreach efforts of the VIP Team aimed at enhancing the community's understanding about its work, the guiding principles and framework, the processes involved as well as the outcomes to date.

Significance of IDNs and Implications on Future Work of the VIP Team

The ALAC reiterates its continued recognition of the significance and importance of IDNs, including IDN Top Level Domains (TLDs) in enhancing diversity and embracing multilingualism on the Internet. We believe that every culture and every language is unique and that the implementation of IDN and IDN Variants would serve to make the Internet more inclusive and representative of the world that we live in.

Given the importance of the work, the ALAC calls on the VIP Team to ensure that the conduct of its future work is accountable, transparent and does not duplicate work that has or is being done within or without the ICANN community. Towards this end, we urge the VIP Team to continuously inform the community on its work and progress, and to draw synergies wherever possible by leveraging on the work and expertise of the wider Internet community.

The ALAC is pleased with the VIP Team's interest in engaging the wider Internet community expressed during the March 2012 ICANN meeting in Costa Rica. In going forward, we advise the VIP Team to maintain a high level of transparency and clarify the project basis for engaging consultants vs. community volunteers vs. ICANN staff.

Comments on the Internationalized Domain Names (IDN) Variant Issues Project (VIP) Proposed Project Plan for Next Steps

Approach

The approach outlined by the VIP Team appears to be a standardized, universal and comprehensive one, which has merit in that it takes into consideration aspects of fairness and security. The approach hinges crucially upon the expectation that it is possible to develop a comprehensive code-point repertoire and label generation rule-set within a specific time-frame. The VIP Team has been careful to clarify to the ALAC during a Webinar on 11 April 2012 that until the label-generation rule-set is complete, the implementation of any IDN Variant would not be considered regardless of the level of community readiness.

The ALAC concern regarding the VIP Team's approach is as follows:

1. The standardized, universal approach is contrary to the community consensus on appropriate approaches to the IDN Variant issues, which are highly diverse. A standardized approach also discriminates against communities who consider themselves ready to implement IDN Variants.
2. Assuming that it is possible to develop a comprehensive code-point repertoire and label generation rule-set within the period specified in the proposed project plan, the project plan indicates that the VIP Team will only be ready to work with communities who can demonstrate that they are ready to implement IDN Variants by the middle of Fiscal Year 2013.
3. The process, timing and criteria for communities to demonstrate their readiness to implement IDN variants are not addressed. This set of information would serve as an invaluable guide for communities regardless of whether they are early entrants or late entrants to IDN Variant implementation.

The ALAC recommends the following:

1. Adopt an inclusive multi-stakeholder bottom-up approach to code-point repertoire development that is consistent with the ICANN IDN Guidelines and relies on the community consensus in identifying and determining code-points by language/script or groups of languages/scripts.
2. Develop a framework based on the findings of the integrated report that would serve as a checklist/guide for language communities to develop their IDN Variant TLD policy and/or implementation plan. Such a checklist would include aspects that include code-point repertoire, code-point overlap, label generation rule-set, types and states of variants, etc.
3. Clarify the process, timing and criteria for engaging with communities who consider themselves ready to implement IDN Variants. In addition, leverage on various ICANN channels for reaching out to various language communities to raise their awareness of these considerations.

Based on our interaction with the VIP Team on 11 April 2012, the ALAC notes with satisfaction that the VIP Team is now prepared to study and approach each variant type separately, as called for by the ICANN community. The ALAC would appreciate receiving from the VIP Team further information regarding:

- *The main variant types they have identified in terms of languages and scripts; and*
- *The timeline envisaged for the deployment of IDNs for each of these variant types.*

Cost

The ALAC would appreciate an elaboration on the financial basis of the proposed project.

Risk

The ALAC understands and appreciates that security risk considerations are paramount. The introduction of new technological advancement however, requires balancing risk considerations with benefits to be derived. The demand for IDN Variants and the findings of the VIP case study reports indicate that the benefits of implementing IDN Variant TLDs out-weigh the risks.

Way Forward

Given that the technical community, including the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), has iterated that the issue of IDN Variants cannot be solved with a technical solution based on current Domain Name System (DNS) standards, the ALAC is of the view that, in the immediate term, the implementation of IDN Variant TLDs should be focused on:

1. The engagement of communities in developing code-point repertoire and label generation rule-set.
2. The development of a process, time-line and criteria for working with communities who are ready to implement IDN Variants.
3. The development of a framework that guides language communities in developing their IDN Variant policy and implementation plan.

In moving forward, we suggest that the VIP Team consult the ALAC in defining policy, criteria and a provisional calendar for enabling communities to implement IDN Variants as well as in setting up a framework that allows language communities to develop their IDN Variant policy and implementation plan, including code-point repertoire and label generation rule-set.