DNS Entrepreneurship Workshop:
'Building a Sustainable Domain Names Business in Africa and the Middle East'

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Opening and Welcome Message

Eng. Hesham El Alaily
Executive President, NTRA, Egypt

Good morning everyone.

I am pleased to be with you today for the opening of this two-day workshop on Domain Name Entrepreneurship. I would like to start by welcoming our guests from Africa and from other parts of the world, here in Egypt; and welcoming you all to this meeting.

I am particularly happy to be partnering with ICANN on this activity, held within the AfICTA Summit this year, in cooperation with Eitesal. This workshop confirms our joint commitment to developing the Domain Name industry in Africa and the whole region; by building a sustainable DNS business infrastructure equipped with the right tools to grow and evolve.

Distinguished Participants,

The Internet is approaching three billion users, and most of its future growth is expected to come from our region. There is no doubt that this global distributed resource has been a catalyst for economic growth, as well as human and social development. In Egypt, the Internet, has developed through partnerships and collaborative efforts among private sector, academia and the government. Since its early days, our commitment, as local Internet community, has been to an environment that enables innovation, growth, and individual empowerment through a multi-stakeholder approach.

I would like to, pause here, and share with you a few indicators from Egypt. As of Q2 2014, almost half of the population is online (44.5 million users). Mobile subscriptions exceed the total number of population (102 million subscribers). There are over 19.5 Million users from Egypt on Facebook.

Yet, when it comes to DNS, we only have a few thousand domain names registered under both the ASCII and Arabic county code Top Level Domains (ccTLDs). There are many thousands of other domain names registered under generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs) such as .com and .net, all of which are registered via non-local registrars. So despite the fact that key figures indicate the efforts and progress achieved to bring citizens online, yet DNS figures clearly show the need for further effort in that area. This is equally true for other neighboring countries, as was highlighted by both regional strategies, conducted by the African and Middle East ICANN communities.

Colleagues,

I am sure we are all quite aware, that hard work is still needed to develop Internet supporting industries. Especially in this region, our communities are still lagging behind in areas such as content development, Internet applications, online services, e-payment and of course the Domain Name industry. It is our collective role to continue to develop those industries, in order to empower local and regional communities and allow them to seize benefits of the Internet economy.

In this context, and in an attempt to bridge those gaps, we at NTRA have embarked together with ICANN on a joint project to establish a DNS Entrepreneurship Center in Egypt, for which we signed earlier this year, a mutual agreement during ICANN 50 in London. The objective of this center is to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship in online related businesses, and develop a robust and healthy Domain Name ecosystem in Egypt, Africa and the Middle East. Collaborating with other partners at different stages, such as the Information Technology Institute (ITI), the Center plans to focus on capacity building, consultancy services, and ultimately lending expertise to projects and initiatives in relevant areas. The overall aim is to advance and strengthen the Domain Name industry and the entire Internet economy nationally and regionally.

Dear Guests,

Our workshop today and tomorrow, will focus on DNS entrepreneurship, and is thus the first of its kind in Egypt. It comes as an initial fruit of our joint partnership and mutual agreement with ICANN. As it kick-starts a series of seminars and targeted programs, it marks the beginning of our endeavor to work more closely on outreach, awareness and capacity building in this specific area.

With the Internet opening up more widely through the launch of new Generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs), we are convinced that building local know-how, whether technical or entrepreneurial, business or policy based, or even legal, is becoming more and more a must. The lack of expertise in those areas is clearly becoming a handicap that our markets are suffering from. Therefore, with the principles of inclusivity in mind, we want to look deeper into the needs of our region and make sure our communities are well equipped to penetrate those markets with equal chances and fair opportunities.

While I understand the challenges we will face, I am convinced that we can be as innovative in our endeavors, just as much as the Internet has catalyzed innovation in the world of today. I call upon all stakeholders in this region to join efforts and maintain the collaborative spirit and positive momentum even beyond this workshop. At NTRA, we greatly appreciate our partnership with ICANN as well as with key players on national and regional levels. Still, we look forward to further strengthening those partnerships, as well as establishing new ones, to reach the ultimate goal of building a sustainable and strong DNS and Internet ecosystem in Egypt and beyond.

At the end, I would like to thank our partners and the co-organizers of this workshop, ICANN, AfICTA and Eitesal. I also thank you all for your interest and your participation. I wish you all, over the course of the coming two days, fruitful discussions and a successful workshop. Finally, I invite you to stay in close contact and join our future activities and programs in this area.

For all our foreign guest, I wish you a pleasant and enjoyable stay in Egypt and hope to see you all again soon.