

Joint AFRALO-AfrICANN Meeting ICANN75 Meeting

Wednesday, 21 September from 05:15 to 06:30 UTC

Statement

TOPIC: Universal Acceptance as a means of accessing the Internet in local languages

We, the African ICANN Community members participating in the ICANN 75 and attending the joint AFRALO/AfrICANN meeting on 21 September 2022 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, discussed **Universal Acceptance as a means of accessing the Internet in local languages** as an important topic for AFRALO.

We acknowledge that ICANN has been at the forefront to ensure Universal Acceptance. More so, UA is a priority for ICANN org and is a strategic goal outlined in the [ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025](#). We recognise the work of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) tasked with undertaking activities that effectively promote Universal Acceptance (UA) through its multiple working groups, local initiatives, and UA Ambassadors.

In this statement, we present an overview of the topic and consequently our suggested recommendations for the community to accelerate the adoption of universal acceptance. **The importance of a diverse multilingual Internet.**

In the global scheme of things, according to [Statista](#)ⁱ, the share of English language used on the Internet as of January 2022 by the share of Internet users is less than 26%. As a result, universal access to online content and digital inclusion requires a multilingual Internet that can address people in their own languages.

eCommerce sales are estimated to reach 24.5% of retail sales worldwide in 2025, a 10.7% growth since 2019, according to insider intelligence. For businesses thinking of tailored services, product suggestions, or advertising, addressing people in their own language is vital. For personalized domain names, language is important. A multilingual Internet with a good user experience is necessary for a thriving eCommerce era.

The Importance of UA to achieve a multilingual Internet:

Technically, to achieve Universal Acceptance (UA), Internet applications and systems must recognize, accept, validate, store, process and display all domain names. UA requires all domain names and all email addresses to work in any software application of the end user's choice. As such, UA is necessary for the online community to take a big leap forward, to include people of different languages, cultures, and communities, thus creating new opportunities for local, regional and international societies and economies.

Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) Market and UA:

To address the issue of UA, it is necessary to take a look at the IDNs market. IDN registries and registrars attempting to sell multilingual domain names must contend with the fact that operating systems, applications, and services further down the supply chain do not support multilingual domain names. However, there is the belief that there is insufficient demand from the supply side to trigger the investments required to update applications and services. While this claim might have been true decades ago, today the situation has changed, with the increase in Internet accessibility and affordability, and because nations are increasingly moving towards digital transformation. More so, as e-commerce strengthens, a multilingual Internet is a necessity. Digital transformation includes systems upgrades and ensuring that people use the software and tools to enable a good online experience. For this purpose, achieving UA now from both supply and demand perspectives is more possible and achievable.

Recommended Actions:

- The need for some kind of market intervention from governments to trigger the UA supply side. As governments move towards digital transformation, achieving UA will be in their best interest.
- Increase in online content and services in local languages: Users' technical requirements are driven by their needs. Thus, as more online content and services in local languages become available, UA tools and software become necessary, triggering the UA demand side.
- Adopting Internet-related curriculum in schools and universities with the aim of enabling innovation and creation in areas related to UA and not only with the aim of raising UA awareness and knowledge.
- Coordinating various local stakeholder training and educational activities through local and regional hubs
- Addressing UA through Special Interest Group (SIGs) as an enabler to online inclusion.
- Supporting local initiatives towards the celebration of the planned annual global UA Days.

ⁱ See URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262946/share-of-the-most-common-languages-on-the-internet/>