

14 October 2024

RE: Joint AFRALO-AfrICANN ICANN80 Statement: "Bridging the Digital Divide: Empowering Africa through Multilingual Internet Infrastructure"

Hadia Elminiawi  
Chair, African Regional At-Large Organization

Dear Hadia,

Thank you and the drafting team for the statement on empowering Africa through a multilingual Internet infrastructure. The statement is posted [here](#). We appreciate the recommendations set out in the statement.

As appropriately noted in the statement, "Multilingualism on the Internet is not only a matter of cultural preservation, but also a catalyst for socioeconomic development and digital inclusion." ICANN has been actively supporting and promoting Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) to enable communities across the globe, including in Africa, to access online content through domain names written in their own languages and scripts. This work has included defining label generation rules to allow secure and usable domain names in many languages used in Africa, written in Arabic, Ethiopic, and Latin scripts. ICANN continues to assist community efforts to expand support for additional languages and scripts.

The Universal Acceptance (UA) of all domain names and email addresses, including those in local languages and scripts, remains a challenge. ICANN has been promoting UA in Africa. Efforts include working with the Association of African Universities to develop the capacity needed for universities to make their websites and email services UA-ready. In addition, ICANN is now seeking further collaboration to integrate IDN and UA-related concepts into African university curricula for sustainable capacity development.

ICANN also continues to support capacity building efforts for UA through the [UA Day](#) events organized annually in collaboration with the ICANN community, including the UA Steering Group. In both 2023 and 2024, more than 20 UA events, out of approximately 50, were held in Africa. ICANN aims to continue supporting these community efforts for UA awareness and promotion in 2025.

To promote technical adoption by registries and registrars, ICANN has published the [UA Roadmap](#), as a technical guide. ICANN will also be promoting Registry Service Providers (RSPs) by announcing their support for UA, based on the UA Roadmap, through the [RSP Evaluation Program](#), which will launch in November 2024.

Since its launch in December 2022, the Coalition for Digital Africa has implemented numerous initiatives across the continent that contribute to enhanced infrastructure and connectivity in Africa. These initiatives include the deployment of [ICANN-Managed Root Server \(IMRS\) installations in Nairobi, Kenya and Cairo, Egypt](#); the expansion of IMRS Singles; DNS Security

Extensions (DNSSEC) Roadshows; and the development of support for Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) through the Coalition.

ICANN, together with our other Coalition partners, is also supporting capacity development efforts in Africa through various projects under the Coalition for Digital Africa: [Capacity Development for ccTLD Registries](#) and [Internet Governance Capacity Development for Government and Lawmakers](#) (see the recent [workshop](#) held in June 2024 for parliamentarians, hosted by the African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance (APNIG)).

Recognizing Africa's unique and diverse context, ICANN remains committed to enhancing inclusiveness and the multistakeholder model across the region, and is steadfast in helping to ensure a stable, secure, and unified global Internet.

Thank you again for the thoughtful statement on this important topic to help guide ICANN's work in Africa, and we look forward to ongoing collaboration with the African community.

Sincerely,



Sally Costerton  
Sr. Advisor to President and SVP, Global Stakeholder Engagement & Interim President and  
CEO Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)