Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues - A contribution from ICANN

Building an enabling environment for access to the Internet

<u>Background</u>

ICANN is pleased to be in a position to respond to this important consultation; we would like to thank the ITU for the opportunity. We also look forward to an opportunity to discuss this contribution, and others, during the Open Consultation meeting on 10th October; where we also hope that stakeholders can contribute ideas for the next Open Consultation.

<u>Summary</u>

This importance of building an enabling environment for access to the Internet has been recognised globally, not least in the 2030 Sustainable Agenda adopted by the UN last year, and in the Outcome Document of the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the 10 year Review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will, at least to an extent, depend on affordable, equitable and secure access to ICTs and the Internet.

The timing of this Open Consultation is thus important. For in achieving sustainable access to the Internet a number of factors are important, not least an environment that allows competitive, affordable and quality services to be provided. ICANN, along with other organisations in the Technical Community, plays a role in enabling a range of top-level domains names to be available for all users, including names in non-Latin scripts, known as Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs).

Equally, access is enabled (as witnessed by the mobile revolution) by innovative and imaginative services that all can access.   The global Domain Name System (DNS) makes an important contribution in this regard, ensuring an open, interoperable and truly global Internet. Without such, enhancing access and connectivity in under-served regions will be extremely difficult.

Multistakeholder Approaches

The development of the Internet has, from its inception, been driven by a variety of actors. Arguably the current Internet (as we know it) would have not been developed without the pioneering work of academics, researchers and engineers and with the benevolent (but often hands-off) support of governments. Similarly the substantial expansion of the Internet over the last 10-15 years would not have taken place without business innovation and investment, enlightened policy by governments and the work of non-government bodies such as ISOC, the IETF, the Regional Internet Registries and ICANN.

Today the drive to achieve affordable, universal and secure access is, equally, being taken forward by a diverse range of actors. While the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (which in September last year adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals) has established a governmental agreed array of targets, it will largely be other stakeholders that will be at the forefront of their application and delivery.

While it is only SDG 17 that specifically references the role of ICTs http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/; it is equally clear that the evolution of the Internet will play a significant role in meeting the targets in many of the other Goals; a fact the ITU have both recognised and articulated. Indeed some observers have noted it is *only* through the widespread deployment of Internet services that the 2030 Agenda will be successful. Thus the criticality of all actors coming together to drive deployment of ICTs; success will come through both multilateral and multistakeholder processes.

Capacity Building

At ICANN we are also privileged to be able to work with other actors involved in capacity building to enhance the take-up of Internet services in various regions. In this regard we work closely with the Internet Society (ISOC) and the various Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), ccTLDs operators, as well as with bodies such as the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO), the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) to lend our expertise on such issues as DNS security and International Domain Names.

We are encouraged, in this regard, with the work being taken forward by UNCTAD in their e-Trade for all Initiative (http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/STI_and_ICTs/eTrade-for-All.aspx) this recognising the important links between an enabling environment for e-commerce services and wider developmental objectives.

Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs)

Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) are domain names represented by characters other than the traditional ASCII characters; thus they typically contain letters or characters from non-Latin scripts (for example, Arabic or Chinese).

ICANN in recognising the importance of linguistic diversity to the growth of the Internet was keen to see the deployment of top-level domain names in non-Latin scripts and thus worked with the ICANN Community in achieving such.

In relation to Country Code TLDs (ccTLDs), the Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) ccTLD Fast Track Process was approved by the ICANN Board in Seoul in October 2009, enabling countries and territories to submit requests to ICANN for IDN ccTLDs, representing their respective country or territory names in scripts other than Latin.

IDN ccTLD requesters have to fulfill a number of requirements:

- The script used to represent the IDN ccTLDs must be non-Latin;

- The languages used to express the IDN ccTLDs must be official in the corresponding country or territory; and

- A specific set of technical requirements must be met.

As a result 39 countries/territories have successfully passed through the String Evaluation stage. Of these, 36 countries/territories (represented by 46 IDN ccTLDs) are delegated in the DNS root zone, with the remainder either readying to apply, or actively applying for delegation of the string.

https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/fast-track-2012-02-25-en.

ICANN will continue to accept new string evaluation requests for non-Latin country-code top-level domains for countries and territories that meet the Fast Track Process requirements.

The introduction of the new gTLD Programme (as outlined below) in 2012 allowed for the introduction of gTLDs in any language, for example Arabic, Chinese or Cyrillic. It was thus really welcome to see some of the first applications approved (and thus delegated into the root of the Internet) were non-Latin IDNs. So far over 90 IDN gTLDs have been delegated.

Generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs)

An enabling environment for Internet Access includes the ability of businesses and other Internet users to have a presence on the web (if they so wish) with a name appropriate and available for them. Increasingly users also wanted a domain name (at the top level) that expressed more about them (or their business) than a .COM, .ORG or a country code designation might. Thus while the expansion of the domain name space that ICANN introduced in 2012 (see https://newgtlds.icann.org/ja) does not physically give any additional access it might encourage business and other bodies to have a web-presence for the first time. We already have examples of small business taking up geographical or Community names

because they feel a strong association with the town they are based or the activity they are engaged in.

A further potential benefit (in terms of enabling access) might be how users are attracted to services provided (on the Internet) by "trusted" entities. If one knew that any on-line services provided by "xxxx.bank" or "yyyy.broker" were secure (and guaranteed as such) then they might be more willing to take part in on-line commerce.

The current statistics on new gTLDs are given at https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb/base-agreement-contracting#stats with over 1100 new Names already added to the root of the Internet.

ICANN has worked closely with others in the Technical Community, such as ISOC, the RIRs and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), in ensuring that this significant expansion of the Domain Name System (DNS) maintains the security, stability and interoperability of the Internet. In addition governments and IGOs (including the likes of UNESCO, WIPO and the ITU) have been instrumental in helping to ensure public policy objectives were met in the expansion of the gTLD space.

DNS Entrepreneurship Centres (DNS-EC)

Last year, together with Egypt's National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA), ICANN launched the first of its kind, a regional DNS Entrepreneurship Center (DNS-EC) in Cairo.

This is an important initiative to support Internet growth in the communities of Africa and the Middle East alongside other organisations including ISOC, the RIRS, and Registries and Registrars. The Domain Name System (as noted above) has potential to foster the development of new businesses in Africa and the Middle East while delivering countless benefits to Internet users. ICANN is committed to making this a tangible benefit for our global communities.

The DNS-EC is charged with helping the Internet ecosystem in Africa and the Middle East evolve. The Center will house DNS technical, policy,

business and legal experts as well as resources to support the implementation of initiatives and projects in this field.

Workshops provided have been covering DNS technical and operational issues, as well as business development and best practices. Contributors have come from over twenty countries, and have included technical, policy and business development professionals from Country Code Top-Level Domain (ccTLD) registries, registrars, and hosting companies, as well as government agencies and academic networks. The Centre has trained more than 200 people to date and is planned to be replicated in other regions.

Conclusion

ICANN, while only having a limited remit and locus on the overall objective of creating an enabling environment for secure, affordable and equitable Internet access, is determined to play its part, and work with others in this important endeavour. We look forward to doing such in the forthcoming ITU CWG Session and in other global fora; not least the 2016 IGF in Mexico.