IDN Implementation Guidelines (IDNG) Working Group (WG)

Notes from Meeting on 09 March. 2016 (at ICANN 55)

Meeting Attendees (in alphabetical order)

WG members:

1. Chris Dillon
2. Dennis Tan (remote)
3. Edmon Chung (in chair)
4. Kal Feher (remote)
5. Mats Dufberg (remote)

Community members:

6. Abdeslam Nasri
7. Barry Leiba
8. Gene [inaudible]
9. Marc Blanchet
10. Michel Suignard
11. Niki
12. Radu [inaudible]
13. Raed al Fayez
14. Via Peske
15. Zuan Zhang

Staff:
16. Francisco Arias
17. Sarmad Hussain

Meeting Notes

1. **Overview of Topics to Review.**   The session started with an introduction of the attendees and the chair gave an overview of the session, where community was being invited to comment on the six topics being currently considered by the IDNGWG. It was also shared that the work done by the IDNGWG has contractual implications.

2. **Transition and Terminology**. Significant terminology has been introduced since the publication of the previous version of the guidelines, so IDNGWG intended to identify and define the new terms for consistent use across all the stakeholders. The attendees were informed that a list of terminology is being developed and available at the wiki page for IDNGWG, where community can come, review, contribute and provide feedback. It is important to have common terminology for various processes in the industry and within ICANN, including Pre-Delegation Testing.

3. **Format of IDN Tables.** The format has evolved since the previous version of the guidelines, though one significant output of the previous guidelines was the creation of the IANA IDN Table

database. The audience was told that a new format is being developed at IETF, under LAGER working group, which is now in last call.   LAGER group members shared that the formalism has been sent to IESG for review and may be placed on IESG agenda for approval on 21 April. Staff also informed that a tool is available to create and use LGRs at lgrtool.icann.org (and credentials to use it can be obtained by emailing IDNProgram@icann.org).   It is important that registries change from the older formats however at the same time the current format is complex – so migration may take a longer time. The current LGR format supports older formats (i.e. it is backward compatible), with the online tool allowing conversion from older to LGR format. However, the process may not be fully automatic as the rules are encoded in text format in the previous formats.

4. **Consistency of IDN Tables.** IDNGWG asked the community what should be the desired level of consistency across TLDs and across levels within TLDs? From a user perspective it would be helpful to have same tables across TLDs, but registries differ in implementations today. It was also noted that ICANN is developing second level reference LGRs. Top-level will be conservative, but second and third level can be more homogeneous. Categorizing the differences between top-level and other levels may not be easily possible so one would need to think through how to handle the difference based on usability. There may also be cases where the same language will be handled differently at second level, e.g. under ccTLD and gTLD; in the latter case, if a registrant picks Japanese vs. Chinese as a language, a Han label may have different set of variants. Community members also shared that there is different registrant experience for Arabic language, when registering under different registries. It should be considered that the user is naïve and does not know the technical differences, so there should be a reference baseline and then any change implemented form this baseline by a registry should be explained in easy to understand words. On the other side, it is also a business decision on how registries want to serve their customers. So though IDNGWG cannot enforce registries on consistency, a guidance or best practice can be provided. The IANA database could be a possible hosting place for the LGRs. It was raised that IDNGWG may consider presenting guidelines in cases where a registry deviates from a reference IDN table, e.g. stating the rationale for moving away from it. This can be done when there are reference tables. IDN tables may have two versions, one which has context (e.g. under .jp for Han script) vs. where there is no context (e.g. under .asia for Han script).

5. **IDN Variants.** A lot of work has been done on formalizing variants in recent years. So IDNGWG would be working to determine the relevant recommendations in this area. IDNGWG has decided to make such recommendations at a high level, e.g. referring to reference tables rather than discuss specific languages and solutions. Some registries may not be implementing variants because it is simpler to implement. It was suggested that it may be better to be more conservative to start with and then become more liberal. Further, variants and contextual rules improve security and usability of labels. An option would be that the guidelines could say some scripts or languages should have variants and contextual rules. Staff also pointed out that there is a report by SSAC (SAC 60) which recommends consistency of variants. IDNGWG noted to review the relevant recommendations in it.

6. **Similarity and Confusability of Labels.** Previous version of the guidelines already refer to string similarity. The current effort intends to look further into this area. Further IDNGWG is considering whether there should be a recommendation to manage cross-script homoglyphs for TLDs offering scripts which can be confused. Various GPs are already looking at confusability across scripts for the Root Zone LGR work which can also be referred to for this purpose. However, the timelines across these efforts may not match.

7. **Registration Data.**   It was stated that IDNGWG was not clear if it would like to include registration data in its scope of work but was currently discussing it. Community input was sought on whether it should be considered. Community indicated that there may be other efforts going on at ICANN but it was also raised to check if the other groups are looking at areas which IDNGWG may specifically consider – as there may still not be an overlap. IDNGWG may not want to pre-empt work elsewhere but may still contribute in areas not being taken up elsewhere. IRD Expert Working Group (EWG) did make some recommendations, but it was not policy work so it is not clear yet how its recommendations may be taken up in policy considerations. Possible topics include showing labels as U-labels and handling variants. IRD EWG did not touch on variants. Members remained divided on relevance of this topic.

8. **EPP Extensions.** A community member also asked if IDNGWG will consider EPP extensions in its work, including how to handle variants. This would be discussed further by IDNGWG.