

Asia Pacific Regional Discussions - APRICOT, Feb 2014

ICANN Update Session, APRICOT 2014

24 February 2014, 1045-1245hrs

The presentation slide can be downloaded here: [ICANN Update_ APRICOT 2014 FINAL.pdf](#)

ICANN's Asia Pacific Hub hosted an Update Session on the sidelines of APRICOT, highlighting key updates from the last ICANN48 meeting in Buenos Aires (November 2013), and key issues that are likely to be discussed at the upcoming ICANN49 meeting in Singapore in March 2014. The session was intended as a 'pilot' to bring some of the key ICANN issues back to our community, in a way that could relate to both newcomers and experts in the region. Through lowering the barriers of entry, we hope to seek to explore ways for our community to collaborate and/or engage on these issues. Almost 80 participants attended the session, including a number that had never previously attended an ICANN meeting.

The session focused on 4 key topics:

- Universal Acceptance of all Top Level Domains (TLDs)
- Internationalized Domain Names (IDN) Variants
- Refining and Replacing WHOIS
- Updates on the New gTLD Programme

The presentation slides can be downloaded in the above link.

This page provides a record of the points discussed, and we hope it will serve to facilitate and profile our community's views at ICANN, leveraging on these points. [We welcome any further comments on this page.](#)

We hope to conduct another update session on the sidelines of other regional events in the future, and welcome suggestions on where these types of sessions can be held as well.

Universal Acceptance

Brief: Constraints imposed in software on what is allowed as a valid domain name (such as limiting domains to specific endings like ".com", or incompatibility with Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)) are artificially constraining the growth and utility of the Internet. Rejection of some TLD strings due to outdated length parameters or other erroneous formatting criteria can be avoided by reliance on authoritative information. This is not an ICANN-only problem; cooperation among registry operators, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), software developers, vendors, and others who deal with domain names on a regular basis is critical to ensuring the continued realization of the Internet's potential for commerce and communications.

As a member of the global Internet Ecosystem, we would like to explore how the Asia Pacific community can work together to address these issues of Universal Acceptance together with ICANN.

Key points highlighted by the community participants include:

ICANN and community advocacy for Universal Acceptance

- As this is a problem that is beyond ICANN, ICANN could serve as a platform for other members in the Internet community, including software vendors and developers, to come together to address this issue at various levels.
- Members of the Internet community in the region could also work with their respective governments to address the issue on a national level.
- While ICANN can and should only play a facilitative role, the Joint IDN Working Group (JIG) report recommends areas that ICANN can work on actively, such as:
 - Requiring contracted parties under ICANN's purview – such as gTLD registries and registrars – to put in place measures that address the issues of Universal Acceptance, by being able to recognize new gTLDs as well as IDN TLDs.
 - As per ICANN's advocacy for the adoption of IPv6 and DNSSEC, ICANN can also directly advocate for governments to address the issue of Universal Acceptance in its conversations with government representatives.
 - ICANN should reach out to the industry, especially the major players, as per its advocacy related to IPv6 and DNSSEC, to conduct workshops and other events to raise awareness of and facilitate the development of industry-wide solutions to the problem.

Under-representation of other language communities

- A participant highlighted that, based on the current ASCII, Latin-script predominant system used on the Internet, the languages of many other communities that are non-ASCII based are currently under-represented in the adoption and implementation of IDNs. This is a sizeable portion of some 1.67 billion people.
- It was agreed that many of these under-represented communities are in the Asia Pacific region. While there was a desire to allow all scripts to be recognized in the root, this is technically very challenging and would require step-by-step implementation.
- As we undergo the implementation of expanding and adding more TLDs, including IDNs, it is important for the Asia Pacific community to be included in the conversation, and to 'come to the table' to ensure that the implementation was inclusive.
- A participant highlighted that in desiring that under-represented communities be represented at ICANN, it is important for our community to reach out to ICANN and let their voices be heard. While it is not realistic for all the language communities to be present at ICANN, we should consider working together to figure this out.
- At ICANN, the At-Large community is one group that seeks to bring the views of under-represented communities to the table.
- The At Large Advisory Working Group will also be addressing this issue at the upcoming ICANN49 meeting in Singapore.

Initiatives going forward

- The Asia Pacific Top Level Domain (APTLD) will be having a meeting in May in the Middle East. Amongst others, a full day will be devoted to addressing the issue of universal acceptance. APTLD will be inviting some large software companies to share information on current initiatives and the current status with regard to addressing the issue.

- Separately, at the earlier APTLD meeting at APRICOT 2014, ccTLDs also shared information on their initiatives to deploy IDN-compliant pilot programmes. Taiwan for example, has an ecosystem that is fully IDN compliant, including email systems. Similarly, Saudi Arabia has also launched a pilot on this front. The challenge, however, is deploying these systems outside of the current smaller scale ecosystems.

Universal Acceptance at ICANN49

- There are plans to discuss this issue at the upcoming ICANN49 meeting in Singapore.
- A participant requested that in preparation for the discussion, as the issue crosses various communities and stakeholder groups, it will be helpful for the team in ICANN that is preparing for this topic to map out the stakeholders and parties across the entire value chain (i.e. registry operators, ISPs, software developers, vendors etc) that are crucial in addressing this issue. It will be useful for these stakeholder groups be invited to discuss this issue at ICANN.

Internationalised Domain Name (IDN) Variants

Brief: Some character sets (such as Chinese, Arabic, Tamil) have IDN *Variant* TLDs. A potential example is: "." vs ".". To support IDN variants in the root zone, ICANN and the ICANN community undertook several projects to study and make recommendations on their viability, sustainability and delegation. We are now more than two years into the project and are in the third phase of the IDN Variant TLD Program. One of the current projects is the "Implementation of the Label Generation Ruleset Procedure (Project 2.2)" which looks at the development of the Label Generation Rules (LGR) for Internationalised Domain Name in Applications (IDNA) Labels for the Root Zone. The work being carried out involves a set of Generation Panels, each for a specific script, an Integration Panel to integrate the work of the Generation Panels, and a set of Advisors to all Panels.

This session covered the Call for Generation Panels to develop Root Zone LGRs and how our community in the Asia Pacific region can lend their expertise to the IDN Variant TLD Program.

Key points highlighted by the community participants include:

Language General Panel work

- Examples of LGR work include:
 - Considering the differences between simplified vs traditional script, which is not a simple task given that the definition of 'simplified' vs 'traditional' changes over time.
 - The selection of types of scripts, as well as taking into account the script-style of specific Brand Names, which are also considered intellectual property
 - Future modifications on these scripts, and how to include them into the Label Generation Ruleset in future.
 - Amongst others, work has begun on the Arabic script LGR panel. In Southeast Asia, the only member on this panel is Ms Rinalia Abdul Rahim. While work has started, interested individuals can still take part in the panel's work. As such, more language experts from Southeast Asia should and are encouraged to participate in the Arabic script LGR panel. This is particularly important given that the Arabic script is used for many other languages in our region, such as Malay, Achenese, Minangkabau, Tausug, Cham and Banjarese. Without experts on the above languages taking part in the Arabic script LGR panel, there will be problems when discussing the LGRs for the Arabic script.
 - At the ICANN48 Buenos Aires meeting, a suggestion was made to form a working group that will work on Chinese/Han characters across Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages. If such a group is formed, there will be a need for volunteers and experts to join the group.

Engagement approach on IDN Variants

- A participant highlighted that the IDN variant issue can be better resolved with the involvement of governments, who have sovereign rights over the languages used in their communities. This also helps to address the issue of the lack of stakeholder representation in the current bottom-up process on LGR panels.
- The participant suggested that multiple approaches be considered – e.g. both multilateral and multi-stakeholder - in resolving the language script challenges.
- In response, another participant noted that the LGR process is a technical one that cannot be addressed by the multilateral, policy approach. This is given that the LGR process deals with Unicode, which requires both language and technical experts to work together. Further, within the ICANN process, communities that do not agree on the variant scripts can discuss the issues in working groups, and the results are open for public comment. Governments are currently involved in the form of the Government Advisory Committee (GAC) in ICANN, and under by ICANN's Bylaws, can comment on the work of the working groups and panels.

Getting started in ICANN

- Another participant highlighted that it was difficult for interested parties to 'get started' and participate not only in LGR work, which requires specific expertise, but also in ICANN work in general. The ICANN Asia Pacific Hub was asked to facilitate mechanisms for our community to obtain the necessary information, to help them get started.

Refining and replacing WHOIS

Brief: In December 2012 ICANN's CEO convened an Expert Working Group (EWG) to help explore how the well-established WHOIS system – which enables global public access to gTLD domain name registration data – can be improved and possibly replaced by a "next generation" solution that would better serve the needs of a changing Internet community. Other efforts are underway at ICANN to analyze and implement changes to specific aspects of WHOIS, including the development of a formal accreditation program for privacy and proxy registration service providers and possible standardization for the translation and transliteration of WHOIS contact information.

Beyond ICANN, the global technical community has been working to replace and update the longstanding WHOIS protocol, including through the proposed new WEIRDS (Web Extensible Internet Registration Data Service) from the IETF. All of these efforts share a common recognition of the inadequacies of WHOIS, including its inability to fully deal with IDN and other issues involving non-Latin scripts.

The session sought the participants' feedback on how ICANN's current policy efforts can result in an improved WHOIS experience for the Asia Pacific community.

Key points highlighted by the community participants include:

- As WHOIS deals with work on standardization, a participant suggested for ICANN to work with IETF on this issue.
- With regard to the issue of standardization for the translation and transliteration of WHOIS contact information, the participant stated his preference for transliteration.
- For future update sessions, the ICANN team can share more information about other efforts across ICANN, including the Expert Working Group's findings and recommendations and the work on Internationalised Registration Data. Care should be taken to ensure that how these efforts feed into one another and are coordinated is communicated to the audience.

New gTLD update

Brief: ICANN's new gTLD Program was launched in January 2012 and attracted over 1900 applications. As of late January 2014, over 100 new strings have been delegated into the root zone, to join the incumbent list of 22 gTLDs, ushering in the most massive transformation of the domain name system in the history of the Internet. Of the new gTLD applications, ICANN received 116 applications for IDNs in a total of 12 scripts; and the first 4 new gTLDs approved for delegation were all IDNs – in Arabic, Chinese and Russian. As more new gTLDs are approved and delegated, potential registrants will have to navigate multiple "sunrise" and "landrush" periods before each new gTLD is finally released by its registry operator for general availability. The first general release of new gTLDs took place in late January 2014.

The session provided updates on the new gTLD programme, as well as links to further information (see presentation slides in the link at the top of the page).

Wrap up

In sum, we noted the following:

- Notwithstanding the fact that ICANN's meetings are open and that everyone is welcome, the barriers to entry for newcomers to engage with ICANN and participate at ICANN meetings are high in terms of gaining access to and readily digesting massive amounts of information, as well as cultural differences. The ICANN team is asked to help to facilitate and encourage participation and commitment by our community to engage in ICANN.
- It is noted that business, non-financial and non-commercial stakeholders are current under-represented. ICANN's Accountability and Transparency Review Team 2 (ATRT2) recently came up with concrete recommendations to address this.
- On representations by the Telco industry at ICANN, given limitations on the number of people who can 'come to the table' at ICANN discussions, a participant suggested that a possible area to explore is to work with the community to develop 'sub-community' meetings. In this regard, a handful of representatives of the Telco industry can participate in the main meetings, and thereafter, these representatives can inform their sub-communities on the status.
- On language/geographical differences and needs, it is noted that not all stakeholders are represented.
- It is noted that in the region, most of our materials are in English, and we will need to work together as a community to galvanize other members of our community to participate in ICANN.
- The presentation slides are available for you to download and translate into your own languages, and for you to represent ICANN in communicating them.