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**Other toponymic issues**

# Request for Expertise from UNGEGN for the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN): Internationalized Domain Name Country Code Top-Level Domain (IDN ccTLD) Fast Track Process[*]

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[*] **Prepared by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)**

# The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

**ICANN**

16 April 2009

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Dear Mrs. Kerfoot:

Thank you for your correspondence, and the opportunity to provide more information concerning ICANN's need for linguistic assistance. As you are aware, ICANN and the global Internet community especially need recommendations on how various linguistic aspects can be addressed in the processes for allocation of new top-level domains (TLDs), in particular in relation to new Internationalized TLDs (IDN TLDs).

I very much appreciate the opportunity to provide you with some detailed information about ICANN' mission and functions and to describe linguistic IDN TLD requirements for the upcoming UNGEGN meeting in May 2009.

Attached to this letter please find a paper describing such information, with a focus on the Fast Track Process. The Fast Track Process is being developed for allocation of a limited number of internationalized country-code TLDs, so that countries and territories can offer domain names in non-Latin characters to their users.

Based on developments during ICANN's most recent international public meeting in Mexico City, Mexico, we expect the Fast Track Process to be available for use before the end of the calendar year 2009. Obtaining access to adequate linguistic expertise is an important component of this process, and we are very much looking forward to continued conversations with you and your team to see how this could be facilitated through UNGEGN.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the attached material. I will be looking forward to further communication before and after the UNGEGN meeting.

Yours sincerely,

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## Linguistic Expertise for the IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) was formed in 1998. It is a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with participants from all over the world dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable. It promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet's unique identifiers (e.g., .com, .info, .jobs, and others).

ICANN is now finalizing a method for allocating a limited number of new country code top-level domains (ccTLDs). The process is referred to as the Fast Track Process and the ccTLDs must be based on non-Latin scripts.

The Fast Track Process will enable countries and territories where formal languages are based on scripts other than Latin to offer their users domain names in non-Latin characters. These new ccTLDs will only be available to the governments and administrations of countries and territories listed in the ISO 3166 standard, or their designated representatives or operators. These IDN ccTLDs will be allocated in addition to the existing ccTLDs based on ISO 3166-1 2 letter codes (e.g., .ca for Canada).

The entire process development is expected to be finalized and launched before the end of the calendar year 2009.

Countries and territories requesting IDN ccTLDs from ICANN will only be granted IDN ccTLDs matching their country or territory name in an official language and script (non-Latin) for the country or territory as listed in the *Technical reference manual for the standardization of geographical names (part III) 2007, and subsequent updates*, or which is documented as a meaningful representation of their country name by an internationally recognized linguistic expert.

ICANN is seeking assistance from the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names to define a process for the identification of internationally recognized experts for those countries and territories which may need such expertise. Additionally, ICANN is seeking assistance from the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in creating examples of documentation that would demonstrate that an applied for TLD is, in fact, a meaningful representation of a country name.

## General Information about ICANN

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) was formed in 1998. It is a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with participants from all over the world dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable.

ICANN is responsible for managing and coordinating the Domain Name System (DNS) to ensure that every address is unique and that all users of the Internet can find all valid addresses. It does this by overseeing the distribution of unique IP addresses and domain names. It also ensures that each domain name maps to the correct IP address. Please see www.icann.org for more information.

In this context ICANN is responsible for both generic top-level domains (gTLDs) such as .com and country code top-level domains (ccTLDs), such as .ca or .fr.

Currently, only the two letter codes from the ISO 3166-1 standard are allocated as ccTLDs, such as .na or .sw. Many countries and territories feel that this restriction significantly limits the ability of their citizens to participate fully in the global Internet.

In response to this concern, ICANN has embarked on a project which will allow countries and territories to also use their country or territory name, in their own language and script, as ccTLDs by the end of 2009. This project is called the Fast Track Project for Internationalized Domain Name for ccTLDs (IDN ccTLDs).

**General Information about the IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process**

The objective of the Fast Track Process is to allow countries and territories to use their country or territory name as a ccTLD by introducing a limited number of IDN ccTLDs that are:

- associated with the ISO3166-1 list and are a meaningful representation of the country or territory name,
- addressing the need for territories and countries that are ready to implement IDN ccTLDs,
- dedicated to preserving stability of the DNS,
- not based on characters from the Latin script,
- agreeing to follow the current delegation practices for ccTLDs.

Applicants for the new IDN ccTLDs may be the existing country-code top-level domain manager for ISO 3166-1 code, or a different entity. In either case, the applicant must have an evidence of support, or non-objection, from the relevant government or public authority.

All activities related to the development and implementation of the Fast Track Process can be found at http://www.icann.org/en/topics/idn/fast-track/.

**Criteria for strings and associated languages and scripts in the Fast Track Process**

The Fast Track Process entails a number of criteria (including script and language) related to the string a country or territory would like to delegate as an IDN ccTLD. For example, the string must be a meaningful representation of the country or territory name, and is considered as such if it is represented in the UNGEGN Manual. The entire text describing these requirements is copied in the following from the latest Draft Implementation Plan for the Fast Track Process http://www.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-18feb09-en.htm.

## 3.1 Language and Script Criteria

*The conditions for the language and script to be used for the selected TLD string are as follows:*

*The language must be an official language in the corresponding country or territory, and have legal status in the country or territory, or serve as a language of administration.*

*The language requirement is verified as follows:*

1. *If the language is listed for the relevant country or territory as an ISO 639 language in Part Three of the Technical Reference Manual for the standardization of Geographical Names, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (the UNGEGN Manual) (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/default.htm); or*
2. *If the language is listed as an administrative language for the relevant country or territory in ISO 3166-1 standard under column 9 or 10; or*
3. *If the relevant public authority in the country or territory confirms that the language is used in official communications of the relevant public authority; and serves as a language of administration.*
4. *Requests can only be for strings in scripts other than Latin; that is, other than the characters (a,....,z), either in their basic forms or with combining marks. Languages based on Latin script are not eligible for the Fast Track process (in accordance with Guiding Principle D from the IDNC WG Final Report).*

## 3.2 Meaningfulness Requirement

*The selected string for the IDN ccTLD must be a meaningful representation of the official name of the corresponding country or territory. A string is deemed meaningful if it is in the official language of the country or territory and if it is:*

- *The name of the country or territory; or*
- *A part of the name of the country or territory denoting the country or territory in the selected language; or*
- *A short-form designation for the name of the country or territory that is recognizable and denotes the country or territory in the selected language.*

*The meaningfulness requirement is verified as follows:*

1. *If the requested string is listed in the UNGEGN manual, then the string fulfills the meaningfulness requirement.*
2. *If the requested string is not listed in the UNGEGN manual, then the meaningfulness must be substantiated, as in the following:*

*Submission and presentation of documentation from an internationally recognized linguistic expert or organization stating that the requested string meets the criteria.*

*ICANN is seeking external expertise in this area to further inform implementation of the process. Additional information will be made available as soon as it is obtained.*

### Linguistic Support to the Fast Track Process

As the IDN ccTLD Fast Track Draft Implementation Plan is outlined, ICANN is currently seeking external support to develop and execute the process for ensuring that only meaningful representations of country and territory names are delegated as IDN ccTLDs. Such support is especially necessary in cases where additional documentation is required for an IDN ccTLD applicant; that is, in cases where the selected string is a part of the long or short form name of the country/territory in the UNGEGN Manual in the selected language, or

- an acronym of that name, or
- the country/territory or the language does not appear in the UNGEGN Manual.

In these cases ICANN requires that the documentation presented by the applicant include a report from an internationally recognized linguistic expert(s) or internationally recognized organization stating that the selected string meets the criteria.

In this context ICANN is seeking assistance from the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names to define a process for identifying internationally recognized experts for those countries and territories that may require such expertise.

Additionally, ICANN is seeking assistance from the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in creating examples of what the documentation from such experts should contain.