

**Twenty-sixth session
Vienna, 2-6 May 2011**

Item 20 of the Provisional Agenda

(Other toponymic issues)

General Information about ICANN *

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The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

25 February 2011

Ms. Helen Kerfoot
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Dear Ms. Kerfoot:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update to the UNGEGN on the first year of ICANN's IDN ccTLD Fast Track program at the upcoming 26th session of the UNGEGN in Vienna, Austria.

As you know, in April 2009 ICANN provided information for the 25th session regarding ICANN's mission, and the process for the introduction of a limited number of internationalized country code top-level domains in non-Latin scripts. Since the last UNGEGN meeting, there have been major developments in ICANN's IDN program, which we hope will be of interest to the experts attending the session in Vienna.

As of the date of this letter, 24 countries and territories have completed the string evaluation stage of the process, and 17 countries and territories (represented by 27 IDN ccTLDs) are delegated in the DNS root zone. This development means that Internet users speaking languages based on Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic, Georgian, Hangul, Thai and Indic scripts (among others) can now use the Internet through domain names registered entirely in their own written language. ICANN is also in the process of conducting its first review of the Fast Track Process.

Experts from the UNGEGN have helped several countries and territories in the Fast Track Process and ICANN appreciates this continued partnership as the IDN ccTLD Fast Track enters its second year.

Yours sincerely,

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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. Part of the hierarchy of the DNS includes the identification of top-level domains, the label that comes after the last dot in a domain name. These include generic top-level domains (gTLDs) such as .com and country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs), such as .ca and .fr. Within ccTLDs, the DNS now includes IDN ccTLDs as well, such as .한국 (Republic of Korea in Hangul) and .рф (RF, for Russian Federation in Cyrillic).

IDN ccTLD Fast Track Program

The IDN ccTLD Fast Track process was launched on 16 November 2009, following approval by the ICANN Board at the meeting in Seoul, Korea on 30 October 2009 (<http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-30oct09-en.htm#2>). The Final Implementation Plan for the IDN ccTLD Fast Track can be found at <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/idn/fast-track/idn-cctld-implementation-plan-16nov09-en.pdf>. 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>.

To date, 24 countries and territories have completed the string evaluation stage of the process. A complete list of countries and territories that have completed string evaluation is available at <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/idn/fast-track/string-evaluation-completion-en.htm>.

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 and territory as listed in the *Technical Reference Manual for the standardization of geographical names (part III) 2007, and subsequent updates* (UNGEGN), or which is documented as a meaningful representation of their country name by an internationally recognized linguistic expert.

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 ISO 3166-1 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 the stability of the DNS,
- Not based on characters from the Latin script, and
- Agreeing to follow the current delegation practices for ccTLDs.

Requesters for IDN ccTLDs may be the existing ccTLD manager for the ISO 3166-1 code, or a different entity. In either case, the requester must have an evidence of support, or non-objection, from the relevant government or public authority.

Within the Fast Track Process, ICANN has utilized 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 sought assistance from UNGEGN experts in creating examples of documentation that would demonstrate that a requested TLD is, in fact, a meaningful representation of a country name.

The language and script criteria, as well as the meaningfulness criteria described in our briefing of April 2009 has remained constant.

Over the first year of the Fast Track process, this expertise has been used on three occasions, and has been very useful for those countries and territories in the Fast Track process.

IDN ccTLD Fast Track Review

On 21 February 2011, ICANN published a summary and analysis of inputs received from the Internet community on first review of the IDN ccTLD Fast Track process (Review announcement - <http://www.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-2-22oct10-en.htm>), including staff recommendations as initial feedback to the community (see <http://www.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-8-21feb11-en.htm>). The recommendations and public comment summary is located at <http://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/fast-track-review-summary-comments-18feb11-en.pdf>.

The ICANN Board of Directors is considering the comments and recommendations at the 40th ICANN public meeting in San Francisco, California 13-18 March 2011. We will provide an update on any changes or actions from the Board at the UNGEGN session in May.

Treatment of Geographic Names in the New gTLD process

As of the date of this letter, the most current material on the treatment of geographic names in the proposed new gTLD process is available at <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/gac-board-geographic-names-21feb11-en.pdf>.



The ICANN Board of Directors and ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) are conducting a consultation session in Brussels, Belgium on 28 February and 1 March 2011. Geographic names is one of the 12 topics identified in the GAC's Cartagena communiqué as "...outstanding and require additional discussion between the Board and the GAC." [Add citation]. On 23 February 2011, the GAC released a "scorecard" in preparation for the consultation, including substantial discussion on the treatment of geographic names. See <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/gac-scorecard-23feb11-en.pdf>. As the treatment of geographic names within the New gTLD Program may change between now and the UNGEGN session in May, ICANN will provide further information at the meeting in Vienna on geographic names in the new gTLD process.