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AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ALAC Statement on the Implementation of IDN Variant Top Level Domains

Introduction

The following individuals composed an initial draft of this Statement after discussion of the topic within At-Large and on the Mailing Lists:

- Edmon Chung, At-Large member from the Asian, Australasian and Pacific Islands Regional At-Large Organization (APRALO) and ALAC Liaison for IDNs; and
- Rinalia Abdul Rahim, ALAC member from the APRALO and ALAC Executive Committee member.

On 10 June 2013, this Statement was posted on the [ALAC Statement on the Implementation of IDN Variant Top Level Domains Workspace](#).

On 20 June 2013, Olivier Crépin-Leblond, Chair of the ALAC, requested ICANN Policy Staff in support of the ALAC to send a Call for Comments on the draft Statement to all At-Large members via the [ALAC Announce mailing list](#).

On 24 June 2013, a version incorporating the comments received was posted and the Chair requested that Staff open a five-day ALAC ratification on the Statement.

On 29 June 2013, Staff confirmed that the online vote resulted in the ALAC endorsing the Statement with 11 votes in favor, 0 votes against, and 0 abstentions. You may review the result independently under: <http://www.bigpulse.com/pollresults?code=3221GzpPDaqF8nvSQntAyCPH>

The Chair then requested that the Statement be transmitted to the Public Comment process, copying the ICANN Staff member responsible for this Public Comment topic.

Summary

1. Introduce IDN Variant TLDs carefully and implement complementary IDN policies concurrently to nurture the growth of the IDN market;
2. Bundle the delegation of TLDs and variant TLDs appropriately to ensure consumer trust among the implicated user communities;
3. Prepare user communities (both IDN users and non-IDN users) via dedicated outreach well in advance of IDN Variant TLD delegation;
4. Demonstrate a strong commitment to multilingualism and facilitate the process of finding common ground between the technical and linguistic communities towards introducing IDN Variant TLDs without undermining the security and stability of the Domain Name System;
5. Expedite the implementation of the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (LGR) process in general and accelerate the delivery of the Han script rule-set given that its variants are well defined and understood; and
6. Strengthen the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (LGR) process by involving the ICANN community in the governance oversight of the process as well as in the implementation planning and delivery of IDN Variant TLDs. In addition: a) ensure that the Root Zone LGR process is accountable and transparent; b) address the weaknesses of the process that have been identified by the community; and c) improve the ICANN Public Comments process, which is a core feedback mechanism for the Root Zone LGR process.

The original version of this document is the English text available at <http://www.atlarge.icann.org/correspondence>. Where a difference of interpretation exists or is perceived to exist between a non-English edition of this document and the original text, the original shall prevail.

ALAC Statement on the Implementation of IDN Variant Top Level Domains

Introduction

The ICANN Board has requested guidance from the community regarding the implementation of the Recommendations contained within the Report on User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs ([http://www.icann.org/en/groups/board/documents/prelim-report-11apr13-en.htm - 2.a](http://www.icann.org/en/groups/board/documents/prelim-report-11apr13-en.htm-2.a)).

After reviewing the Report as well as the “IDN Variant TLD Program - Risk Analysis Studies” dated May 2013, the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) advises the following:

Summary of Recommendations

1. Introduce IDN Variant TLDs carefully and implement complementary IDN policies concurrently to nurture the growth of the IDN market.
2. Bundle the delegation of TLDs and variant TLDs appropriately to ensure consumer trust among the implicated user communities.
3. Prepare user communities (both IDN users and non-IDN users) via dedicated outreach well in advance of IDN Variant TLD delegation.
4. Demonstrate a strong commitment to multilingualism and facilitate the process of finding common ground between the technical and linguistic communities towards introducing IDN Variant TLDs without undermining the security and stability of the Domain Name System.
5. Expedite the implementation of the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (LGR) process in general and accelerate the delivery of the Han script rule-set given that its variants are well defined and understood.
6. Strengthen the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (LGR) process by involving the ICANN community in the governance oversight of the process as well as in the implementation planning and delivery of IDN Variant TLDs. In addition: a) ensure that the Root Zone LGR process is accountable and transparent; b) address the weaknesses of the process that have been identified by the community; and c) improve the ICANN Public Comments process, which is a core feedback mechanism for the Root Zone LGR process.

Recommendations

1. Introduce IDN Variant TLDs carefully and implement complementary IDN policies concurrently

Facilitate the introduction of IDN Variant TLDs carefully so as to nurture growth of the IDN market. The successful implementation of the initial set of IDN TLDs and IDN Variant TLDs will create higher visibility for IDNs and can be expected to stimulate further demand.

The prioritized implementation of IDN new gTLDs must be accompanied with the concurrent execution of complementary and enabling policies, specifically:

- Implementation of policies that support the Universal Acceptance of IDNs,
- Implementation of IDN Variant TLDs; and
- Inclusion of IDN variant support in the Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH).

2. Bundle the delegation of TLDs and variant TLDs appropriately

In cases where variants are well defined and understood, and where they are essential for the communication needs of user communities, IDN Variant TLDs must be delegated together with IDN TLDs to ensure consumer trust among the implicated user communities.

Concurrently, variant support in the Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH) must be included in time to accommodate the delegation of appropriate TLDs to address the issues of user confusion as well as effective trademark protection.

3. Prepare user communities (both IDN users and non-IDN users) via dedicated outreach

Release appropriate educational materials and conduct awareness-raising initiatives widely on the use and impact of variants on different user communities well in advance of IDN Variant TLD delegation.

These outreach efforts should target IDN users as well as non-IDN users to address any trust issues that they may have. See the following as an example of research/survey findings indicating the need for more education and awareness-raising about IDNs in developed economies - <http://www.domainnews.com/en/afiliis-research-75-of-uk-and-us-consumers-oblivious-to-new-web-extensions.html>.

4. Demonstrate a strong commitment to multilingualism and facilitate collaboration between the linguistic community and the technical community

The introduction of IDN Variant TLDs is a policy choice, which requires the strong commitment of ICANN and the ICANN community to multilingualism. The competing perspectives between the technical (conservative) and linguistic (comprehensive) communities need to be balanced carefully. A demonstrated commitment to multilingualism and careful facilitation will support collaboration between the two communities in finding workable solutions and common ground in introducing IDN Variant TLDs without undermining the security and stability of the Domain Name System.

5. Expedite the implementation of the Root Zone LGR process

Expedite the implementation of the Label Generation Rules (LGR) process for the Root Zone to address the risks that have been identified in the "IDN Variant TLD Program - Risk Analysis Studies."

Ensure that lack of expertise is not a reason for delaying or prolonging the implementation of the process. The inadequate supply and availability of the right kind of experts have been identified as a possible bottleneck for the Root Zone LGR process. We note that a call for subject matter experts has been issued on 6 June 2013. Should the response prove to be inadequate, measures would be required to seek expertise outside of the ICANN community.

Expedite the delivery of the Han script rule-set in the Root Zone LGR process. Among all the writing systems studied by ICANN in the IDN Variant Issues Project (VIP), the Han script variants are the most well defined and understood. ICANN experts concurred during the ICANN 46th Meeting in Beijing that the Han script is possibly the only exception in this regard.

6. Strengthen the Root Zone LGR process and its governance

The Label Generation Rules (LGR) for the Root Zone process is crucial for deriving a comprehensive and consistent treatment for variants. Strengthen the process by involving the ICANN community (Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committee) in the governance oversight of the process as well as in the implementation planning and delivery of IDN Variant TLDs. In addition:

- Ensure that the Root Zone LGR process is accountable and transparent.
- Address the weaknesses of the Root Zone LGR process that have been identified by the community (i.e., the lack of a review and appeals process, insufficient supply and availability of experts, and inadequate mechanisms for avoiding capture).
- Improve the ICANN Public Comments process (a core feedback mechanism for the Root Zone LGR process) to enable a more open and meaningful stakeholder participation.

The ALAC's advice as indicated above is consistent with the following statements that we have issued regarding IDNs and IDN Variants:

- [ALAC Statement on Trademark Clearinghouse and IDN Variants](#)
- [ALAC Statement on IDN Variant TLD Program – Interim Report Examining the User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs](#)
- [ALAC Statement on the IDN Variant TLD Program – Procedure to Develop and Maintain the Label Generation Rules for the Root Zone in Respect of IDNA Labels - Second Public Comment Draft](#)
- [ALAC Statement on the IDN Variant TLD Program – Procedure to Develop and Maintain the Label Generation Rules for the Root Zone in Respect of IDNA Labels](#)
- [ALAC Statement on the Draft Recommendations Overall Policy for the Selection of IDN ccTLD Strings](#)
- [ALAC Statement on the IDN Prioritization in the New gTLD Program Targeted at the ICANN Board](#)
- [ALAC Statement on the Internationalized Domain Name \(IDN\) Variant Issues Project \(VIP\) Proposed Project Plan for Next Steps](#)