ICANN ISSUE UPDATE

FAST TRACK PROCESS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF IDN CCTLDS

June 2008

Prepared by ICANN Staff to support community discussions.

ICANN's IDNC Working Group (IDNC WG) is finalizing its report on feasible methods that would enable the timely and efficient ("fast track") introduction of a limited number of non-contentious IDN ccTLDs, while a global, long-term IDN ccTLD policy is being developed by the ccNSO. On 13 June, 2008, the IDNC WG issued a Draft Final Report providing advice on issues that need to be considered in developing (1) a mechanism for the selection of the IDN ccTLD string, and (2) a mechanism to designate an IDN ccTLD manager. During the ICANN Paris meeting, the Report is expected to be finalised by the IDNC WG, discussed by several Supporting Organisations and Advisory Committees, and will be the focus of a public workshop. The Report also has been posted to encourage additional discussion at *http://www.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-3-13jun08-en.htm*.

Background

As a result of the ICANN Board resolution approved at the Los Angels meeting, the IDNC WG was established according to its charter. The IDNC WG is comprised of Members of the GAC and the ccNSO (including their Chairs), two members each from the GNSO and the ALAC (and additional observers from the GNSO), one member from the SSAC, one representative of technical community, and two ICANN Staff members. Chairs of the IDNC WG are Mrs. Young Eum Lee, member of the ccNSO Council, and Ms. Manal Ismail, GAC Representative from Egypt.

The purpose of the Fast Track process is to introduce a limited number of non-contentious IDN ccTLDs, associated with the ISO 3166-1 two-letter codes in a short time frame to meet near term demand. The scope of the IDNC WG was limited to developing feasible methods (for the introduction of a limited number of IDN ccTLDs) that do not pre-empt the outcomes of the ccNSO's IDN policy development process.

In developing feasible methods, the IDNC WG was required to take into account and be guided by: the overarching requirements of stability and security; IDNA protocols and IDN guidelines; input of the technical community with respect to implementation of IDNs; and current practices for the delegation of ccTLDs.

The working group published two previous draft reports for comment from the global community: a draft Initial Report to canvass the community on the topics that needed to be covered; and a draft Interim Report to canvass the community on a methodology.

As indicated in the IDNC WG Initial and Interim Reports, the Fast Track requires two specific mechanisms: 1) A mechanism for the selection of the IDN ccTLD string; and 2) A mechanism to designate an IDN ccTLD manager.

Based on the input received, the working group developed a number of general guiding principles that, in conjunction with the overarching requirements, guide conditions for the methodology. The methodology describes (at a high level) the activities, roles, and responsibilities of the actors involved in the processes.

The IDNC WG anticipates that this will need to be further detailed by ICANN Staff as a matter of implementation. Their Report notes that, in order to implement the recommended methodology, some of the current procedures and practices (for instance the practices relating to the maintenance of the repository and requirements for an IDN table), may need to be changed. The working group indicates, however, that identifying these procedures, or suggesting changes, is considered a matter of implementation.

Draft Final Report Content

The IDNC WG and other groups in the ICANN community are continuing their discussions of the Report during the [ICANN meeting in Paris](#). Therefore, the recommendations set forth in the Draft Final Report are subject to change.

Guiding principles developed by the IDNC WG, based on input received during the various comment periods, are summarized below:

A. Ongoing Process – The Fast Track should be an ongoing process to enable a selected IDN ccTLD manager to enter when ready, but should end when a global IDN ccTLD policy has been adopted by the ICANN Board.

B. Non pre-emption of overall policy – The Fast Track should not pre-empt final IDN ccTLD policy, so it must be a simple, clear and limited solution.

C. Purpose of Fast Track is to meet pressing demand – The Fast Track should only be available where there is a pressing demand in the territory (evidenced by readiness to meet the requirements).

D. Fast Track only for non-Latin scripts – To avoid pre-empting the ccNSO's PDP, which will consider the possibility of IDN ccTLDs in Latin script, non-Latin script must be used in the Fast Track.

E. The proposed string and delegation request should be non-contentious within the territory – "Non-contentious" is evidenced by the support/endorsement of the relevant stakeholders in the territory for the selected string as a meaningful representation of the name of the territory, and for the selected delegate.

F. The Fast Track is experimental in nature – This should be taken into consideration when delegating names, but should not be interpreted to mean that delegation under the Fast Track will be temporary.

G. Criteria determine the number of IDN ccTLDs under the Fast Track – The number of eligible IDN ccTLDs should be determined by criteria to select the IDN ccTLD string, and to designate the IDN ccTLD manager.

The methodology recommended by the IDNC WG includes three stages:

1. Territory or country preparation of actions required to enter the Fast Track process;
2. Due diligence (evaluation) and submission of delegation request to ICANN; and
3. IANA Delegation Process.

These stages are described in detail in the attached Draft Final Report and were devised to enable:

- The relevant actors in the territory to self-assess and determine whether the delegation of an IDN ccTLD under the Fast Track process is feasible; and
- The relevant stakeholders to select a string for the IDN ccTLD and prepare for a delegation request.

The Report proposes the following criteria to select a string for an IDN ccTLD:

1. To be eligible under the Fast Track a territory should be listed on the International Standard ISO 3166-1 Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions – Part 1: Country Codes.

2. Identify "official" language and script. An official language is considered to be one that has a legal status in the territory or that serves as a language of administration. The script should not be based on the 26 letters of the Latin alphabet -- a-z -- that are encoded in US-ASCII.

3. Select a string that meets meaningfulness and technical requirements. A string is considered meaningful if it is in the official language and:
   a. Is the name of the Territory; or
   b. A part of the name of the territory that denotes the territory in the language; or
   c. A short-form designation for the name of the territory, recognizably denoting it in the indicated language.

Ongoing Discussions and Potential Implementation Issues

Included below are some of the issues expected to be part of the discussions during the Paris meeting, within the IDNC WG as they finalize the Report, and at stakeholder group meetings and the public workshop.

<u>Request should be non-contentious within the territory</u>

A minority group of IDNC WG members have suggested that Principle E should reflect that the selected string should not only be non-contentious within the territory, but also be non-contentious across territories. The majority of the IDNC WG indicated opposition to broadening the principle. The basis for their opposition included avoiding the implications and impact of an objection procedure under the Fast Track.

<u>Objection Procedure</u>

Against including an objection procedure: Some IDNC WG members have suggested that introducing an objection procedure could impinge on the sovereignty of territories

in determining the name of their territory, and would add an unnecessary complication to the process. Assuming that a selected string meets the specified criteria, an objection procedure would enable territories or other entities to co-determine or object to the name of a country, dependency, or other area of particular geopolitical interest.

Support for including an objection procedure: Some IDNC WG members expressed the view that an objection procedure, or at least a formal public comment process, is necessary to enable ICANN and the ICANN Board to deal with objections to a selected string from the worldwide community. They have noted that, without a pre-defined process and criteria, the Board is left dealing with public comments on its own and potentially through ad-hoc processes.

For transparency reasons, the IDNC WG did agree that the selected string, once vetted against technical and linguistic criteria, should be published on the ICANN website.

Legal Arrangement Between ICANN and IDN ccTLD Manager

The IDNC WG has not made any recommendation on a legal arrangement, considering it outside their scope to advise the ICANN Board on this matter. It is deemed to be an implementation issue.

Although the IDNC WG discussed including a statement in the Final Report on the issue of ensuring compliance to IDNA Protocol and IDN Guidelines, the views of the WG diverged on this topic.

Some IDNC WG members questioned the need for a compulsory arrangement between ICANN and the IDN ccTLD manager. Other working group members – and the GNSO Council – have stated that the IDN ccTLD registries should be required to follow the ICANN IDN guidelines in the same way as gTLD registries, and ICANN should have a contract or some other form of agreement with the IDN ccTLD operator that includes appropriate technical, operational and financial requirements. Such an arrangement was viewed to ensure a smooth transition of the Fast Track IDN ccTLD to the ccNSO PDP IDN process once it is established.

In addition, some working group members have insisted that a mechanism will be required to ensure the security and stability of the DNS (including compliance with IDNA protocol and IDN guidelines), which is an overarching requirement for Fast Track.

Financial Contribution

The IDNC WG has not considered financial contributions (either an application fee or an annual contribution) in its discussions. It was considered to be out of scope, and more appropriately addressed as an implementation issue. However, this issue was raised at several public meetings. Based on these discussions, some members of the IDNC WG expressed a view that any financial contribution should be given on a voluntary basis, as is currently the case for (ASCII) ccTLDs, while other members (and the GNSO Council) publicly expressed that they expect a reasonable financial contribution from IDN ccTLDs as part of a legal arrangement with ICANN.

Initiation of the Fast Track will enable introduction of IDN ccTLDs and new (IDN) gTLDs at about the same time.

ICANN Staff is coordinating efforts so that work between the two processes can take advantage of each other and aim at a similar launch date. However, should one process be delayed for unexpected reasons it is not considered a viable solution to delay the other process (this view has been reinforced by the GNSO Council).

ICANN Stakeholders

It is anticipated that the ccNSO, GAC, GNSO Council, GNSO Constituencies (Registrars, Registries, Business, IP, ISP, and NCUC), ALAC, and others will develop formal opinions during or soon after the Paris ICANN meeting.

Implementation Work

In addressing the feasibility of implementing the IDNC WG recommendations, it is expected that ICANN Staff will need to explore:

- A request for information process (RFI) on expected use of the Fast Track;

- Issues surrounding the establishment of the Technical Committee;

- Issues surrounding the establishment of the Language Expert Advisory Panel;

- Development of a process to receive submissions of a selected string;

- Issues surrounding evidence of support by relevant stakeholders in territory for selected IDN ccTLD string;

- Coordination between ICANN, the Technical Committee, and LEAP; and

- Conducting review, and potential update, of IANA practices relating to the maintenance of the repository and requirements for an IDN table.

Reference Documents & Events
- 5 October 2007 the ccNSO letter to ccTLD managers including survey to assess the interest and readiness for introduction of IDN ccTLDs.
- 5 December 2007, results of ccNSO survey, showing 86% of the respondents had an interest in a fast track approach.
- 2 November 2007, ICANN Board chartered IDNC WG and invited SOs, ACs to appoint members.
- 14 December 2007, IDNC WG established with members from the GAC, ccNSO GNSO, ALAC, SSAC, Technical Community and ICANN Staff.
- 2008 - IDNC WG conducted numerous teleconference meetings, face-to-face meetings in New Delhi and Geneva, and numerous public workshops and discussions in conjunction with other regional meetings, such as in New Delhi and Dubai.

- 1 February 2008, IDNC WG posted "Discussion Draft of the Initial Report" for public comment.
- 11 February 2008, Draft Initial Report was discussed at ICANN New Delhi meting.
- 4 April 2008, IDNC WG posted Interim Report for public comment.
- April, May 2008, Interim Report discussed at the ICANN Regional Meeting in Dubai, UAE, the RIPE meeting in Berlin, and the APTLD meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 13 June 2008, IDNC WG posted Draft Final Report for public comment.
- 21 June 2008, IDNC WG meeting at Paris ICANN meeting, along with public workshop. The GAC, ccNSO, GNSO, and ALAC have the Final Report on their agenda for discussion in Paris.