
ICANN76 | Prep Week – Internationalized Domain Name Program Update
Wednesday, March 1, 2023 – 18:00 to 19:00 CUN

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Hello and welcome to the Internationalized Domain Name Program Update Session. My name is Sarmad Hussain and I am the remote participation manager for this session.

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PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Thank you, Sarmad, and welcome everybody to the session. I am Pitinan Kooarmornpatana from IDN program at ICANN. I will take you through a few agendas on the IDN program updates today.

So without delay, this is what we plan to cover today. First, we will talk about the IDNs in numbers. And this is based on our recently published annual IDN report. And then we will go through the updates on the status of the various projects related to IDNs at ICANN. And also, we also touched upon the IDN-related policy development as well. And then we hope we get to have some time for Q&A at the end.

For the first agenda, the IDN numbers. So we start to publish the IDN annual report since 2021. So this is the second time we publish. The first one, the link is here. You can find it in the presentation of the session. So for the previous report, it was published early in 2022. And then for the 2022 annual report was published on 16 February this year.

So for this year in the report, we cover four main parts. First will be about delegation and registration statistics, and then also touch upon the policy being developed by ICANN community. We also report some of the progress in the projects within ICANN and also share some of the implementation and operation at ICANN Org. You can find the annual report in this link here.

And then in this session we will show some of the statistics for you. So far the statistic we also have number for both top level, domain level and second level. So for the top level, this is the number for ccTLDs. So to date we have 26 IDN ccTLD string process, the string evaluation process from 43 countries and territories. With this we have 61 delegated to the root zone. There is still one pending for delegation.

Moving on further gTLDs So, we have now 91 IDN gTLDs being dedicated to the root zone and they are listed here. You can see most of them are in Chinese and some of them in Arabic, Japanese, and also Cyrillic.

So, by the [inaudible] over the year, you can see here since 2010, at the at the beginning the delegated IDN TLDs are from ccTLDs And then starting from 2013 after the 2012 round gTLDs we started to have the IDN gTLDs.

So, in the recent year, we also have some revoked by the NCC TLD from the g side that we never have [inaudible] from the ccTLDs. So, to date we have in total 152 TLDs in the root zone.

If you look into this and breaking it down by the scripts, these are grouped by the scripts. We have the most group in the CJK or Chinese Japanese and Korean. Then the second one will be in Arabic. And then

we have also a number in Neo-Brahmi, which is the script used in India and South Asia and we also have seen others.

Moving on to the second level, we have the series of registrations break out into the scripts over the years. So, this number [inaudible] to analyze here. So we can see that there's likely declining in the registration trend. And also to note this is the registration under only gTLDs. By the ICANN remit, we only have access to the zone file for the contracted parties. But we are also looking into how can we work within ICANN or with the other organizations to get more numbers on the ccTLD as well in the future.

And then based on the trend here, the declining is going there, but slowly the ones that have the similar trends will be Chinese, Japanese and also Cyrillic, which is a little bit declining. We see the stable in the remaining ones and for Latin it is slightly increasing. So, for this we also looking into the factors of declination as well and we're still looking into maybe one of the possible factors is the awareness issues. We might still need to advertise this to the right target of the user. Perhaps the one who knows about IDNs currently in the group that might not have difficulty using English or Latin screen while the one who actually needs to use this maybe not aware that this is an option for them.

Also the technical issues. For example, the universe acceptance issue still also can be one of the blockage as well. So, with these two points, we are working closely with the community to address this via the various projects and initiatives like the universal acceptance projects that I also presented during the prep week.

So coming back to this distribution by the snapshot of December 2022, about half of the registration are in Chinese or HAN scripts and then followed by about 36% for Latin and Korean and so on. So this is a part of the [IDNs in] numbers from the report. Moving on. And feel free to also leave comments or questions.

Then moving on to the next section, which is the projects within ICANN. So the first one will be the second level reference LGR, the label generation rules.

So as a background, if the TLDs would like to offer a script or language under the TLDs, they have to define the rules on how to use that particular script properly and that is something we call label generation rules. It's also been encoded in the rules and sometimes interchangeably can use the term IDN tables.

So, with this past several years, we have worked with the commodity to define the label generation rules for the root zone. And right now, we have the rules for 26 scripts based on the community feedback through the Root Zone LGR Project.

So, with that knowledge, we use that as a base and then develop the second level reference LGR and also consulting with the script community when we're developing this and we finalize this for the public comment.

So, if a TLD registry operator would like to offer the IDN at the second level, they can use the reference LGR when they develop as a reference. And at the same time, ICANN Org also use this reference LGR to review the registration rules submitted by the registry operators. So, this

reference LGR is contributing to the consistency and transparency of the [inaudible] process and this is also the by the request from the Registries Stakeholder Group.

So, currently, we have the seven additional script base LGR being published for the public comment. They are Armenian, Cyrillic, Latin, Greek, Japanese, Korean, and Myanmar. Also with this availability of the script base LGR the related language LGR also has been updated. So the public comment is going on. It is closing this Friday, the third of March. So if you are interested to provide your comment please do so by this Friday.

After the public comment proceeding at this batch and after is finalized, we will have a total of 54 reference LGRs published. There will be 31 languages base and 23 script base LGR as listed here.

Then, another section to this work is right now as mentioned earlier, based on the knowledge we have in the root zone LGR version five, which is the latest version, we can support the six scripts we developed the reference LGR accordingly. However, the Unicode version 14, they actually encode many more scripts. Right now they have 159 scripts. Each script has been categorized into three sets based on these Unicodes under Annex 31. So the three categories recommended script, which is the script that we aim to support, and then the limited use script and excluded script.

So earlier, we also issued a public comment on how the community would think about how to support the limited use in excluded scripts. The feedback that we receive from the Registries Stakeholder Group is

suggesting that the limited use of excluded script also should be able to support with the note that if a reasonable justification is made by the registry operator. So for that, then the community using this won't be excluded in the domain names.

So with this input, we are now at the next step which is we are working with RySG and asked the communities to develop the approach how to support these two categories of the scripts. And once the approach is finalized then we will continue and develop the next batch of the reference LGR where it's related.

I see some questions in the chat.

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

Yes, there is one question in the chat. The question is It's from [Ashilgi]. Sorry if I mispronounce the name. "Knowing that gTLDs and ccTLDs have nothing to do with the content on a website, I wonder, and I would like to have more explanation on how the IDNs contribute to diversity in the Internet ecosystem."

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Thank you so much. Let me try to respond to that. And if anything else, Sarmad, you can also chime in as well.

So, the domain name is like the identity, online identity, for you as well. So of course, today, we might already use applications or other social media platform more and not really use the website itself. But the idea is more like providing the options to the end user if they would like to have the websites in their own languages and [inaudible]. So that will

contribute to accessibility. It's more like providing the choice to express yourself in your own language and scripts.

For example, sometimes if you represent ... My mother tongue is Thai language. So some of the Thai word cannot directly transliteration into English and so it can be misinterpreted, or it can be misspelling. If I have a choice to be able to express my online identity via my own languages, that would be actually something I would like to do. So in a way, I think is not really anything else more than provide a choice to the end users if they like.

Sarmad, you'd like to chime in?

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

Yes. Thank you, Pitinan. So certainly, it provides choice to end users. But in addition to that, it also allows users to navigate within on the internet or online to get to the right content. So yes, the content is available, but one would need proper mechanism or more, I guess, easy mechanism, addressing mechanism, to get to the to that content. And for those, for example, end users who are not able to read, I guess, English or Latin script, if they don't have any other choice, they may not actually be able to navigate their way to the right content. So IDNs also provide, in addition to choice, better and more usable mechanism to navigate the DNS. Thank you.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Thank you, Sarmad. I hope that addressed your question. So let me move forward. The next projects that are happening in ICANN on the

IDN is the label generation rules tool, the LGR tool.. So before we already have the reference rule defined. Now we also have the tool, how to use those rules as well.

So now, the LGR tool is now integrated into the ICANN account and is already available through ICANN services. So if you have ICANN accounts and you would like to try, you can log in, click on the ICANN services and then it will show this page. The LGR tool is in this icon.

What it does is provide three modes. First is the basic mode where user can just easily validate a labels against the selected reference LGR. And then the second one will be the IDN table review. So this is mainly for the registry operators. So if they build the IDN tables and would like to check the IDN table before submitting, then they can use this tool to compare the IDN table with the reference LGR.

And the third mode will be the advanced mode where the user can use this mode to modify, manage or create the LGR himself. And two is an open source software. So anyone interested to integrate this functionality into their own system, the source code available on GitHub, and you can follow the link here.

Then let me just quickly show some part of the tool. So this is the first page when you landing, you will have these three modes: the basic mode on the top left, and then the IDN table review on the top right and then the Advanced mode at the bottom. So I will show two cases for basic mode. So for the basic modes, what you can do is validate the labels and then also it can check the collision against the existing dedicated TLDs. And then it can generate the various levels.

So just for example, if you click on the basic mode, then you come to this page. In this example, we'll just put example labels called just ABC. And then I select the Latin script root zone LGR as the reference data to check. Then I put the input the ABC labels here, and then click validate. So the tools can check these labels against the reference data that I selected, and then a third one is valid.

But then it's also continuing check whether this level collides with any existing TLDs. And for this case, it's showing some collisions. So because of the level, ABC is already delegated in the root zone.

Then the next example, this is the second example, then I still use the Latin script, because it's easier for all of us to read. Then the example now is the word “ECC”. Select the Latin script LGR. I put the label ECC, again is check whether this is valid levels or not. And it's return valid.

So continuing check the collision, this time you don't have the labels or the variance of the labels in the root zone that collide with the ECC, so there is no coalition.

It also generate the variant labels. And in this case, the Latin E and Latin C has the variant code point in Cyrillic. So this might be a little bit small. But if you see the first level here, it will have something looked like ECC, but all the code points are Cyrillic scripts. So this tool can also generate the variant label for whatever input you put in as well. So this is just some example of the basic mode.

All right, then, let's move on. So we have the reference data, we have the tool, and then the first two projects is kind of tied up to this IDN table update project.

So the background of this project is, as I mentioned earlier, as well, if a gTLD registry operator intends to offer registration at a second level in different languages or scripts, they must define IDN table for that language and script. And then those IDN table has to be review for security and stability consideration by ICANN.

So back in 2019, we received the request from RySG asking that the IDN table review process should be made more consistent and transparent. And so to address RySG input, we conduct this IDN table update project. Following that input, we also [did find] a dedicated service for the IDN service process and also the registry system testing process, which we have this IDN table review bringing in house. We also developed the reference LGR, the first protect I mention, and also the LGR tools and the second one.

In summary of the IDN table update projects, we conducted into three phases. Phase one completed in June 2021. In that phase, we ensure that all the IDN tables that is contractually approved also post and made available on IANA repository. And this is a requirement in the spec 6 of the base registry agreement.

The second part of Phase 1 is developing the tool and develop additional reference LGRs. Then we also created the dedicated IDN service to make the add, modify, and remove of the IDN table become more streamlined. This service is available in the NSp for registry operators.

Then, in phase two ... So from July to December 2021, we use the reference data we have and also using the tool to review the IDN tables

that are published on an IANA repository. So we have reviewed 14,000 IDN tables and some of the table has been published there for quite some time, like for almost 10 years, for example. So some of them might not include the newly defined security requirements that is made available now to the community. So we review them and then identify any potential security or stability issues.

Then continue on phase three, which happened last year and continuing on this year. We communicate the issue that we found in Phase 2 to the relevant registry service providers, and now we currently collaboratively working with them to address these issues.

Ten before I move on to the next part, I saw a question in the Q&A pod from Yoshiro Yoneya. “Where can I find the LGR tool repository on GitHub?” The GitHub link is on the LGR 2 page. I will request, Sarmad, if you could share the link or later I will share the link with you as well.

Okay, then moving forward. The next project is the IDN Implementation Guidelines version 4.14. The background of this project is that the IDN Implementation Guidelines is the policy for IDN registrations, which is the practice that decide to minimize the risk of cybersquatting and consumer confusion in their TLDs. This guideline is contractually binding through the gTLD registry agreement and it's also recommended through the IDN ccTLD fast track process.

So the guideline has been updated times two times. Right now, the latest version is version four was published in 10th May 2018. And at that time GNSO Council requested that ICANN work to defer the adoption.

And then later GNSO IDN expedited policy development process or IDN EPDP was formed to develop the IDN related policy and some of the question in the project charter also overlapping with some of the guidelines. So for that after subsequent discussion between ICANN Board and GNSO Council, the ICANN Board deferred implementation of the guidelines 6A 11, 12, 13, and 18 because due to the overlap with the ongoing work in the IDN EPDP working group.

So, after that, ICANN Board direct ICANN to publish the remaining guidelines as version 4.1 and then direct ICANN Org to implement. So now, we are starting the analysis of the implementation, and for more detail we will come back and report soon and are restarting to looking into the implementation of version 4.1.

This is the overview of the guideline version four and what has been deferred. So basically the guidelines have seven topics from transition IDNA 2008, the format of IDs tables, the consistency of IDN tables practice, the variant labels, the similarity and confused ability of labels, the publishing of the related policies and terminologies.

So for the five guidelines being deferred, they are about the IDN table format, and then the set about variance that has to be located to the same registrant or blocked and also how the variant level B has to be requested by the same registrant. IDN table harmonization, also one of the relevant two variants that have been deferred.

And then finally, the publishing of the registration policy and rules. Also for the scope of work for the IDN EPDP working group, we're also looking into how to update the IDN Implementation Guidelines in the

future as well. Okay, moving to the next section, the IDN related policy development.

So, this will give just an overview on the IDN related policies happening currently. So, there are a few work going on, one of them already finished by the community, which is the new gTLD subsequent procedure or SubPro. So, the final report has been approved by GNSO Council since 18th of February 2021 and ICANN Org also conduct the ODA or Operational Design Assessment and that has been done and submitted to the board on December 2022. So, right now, the Board is considering the final report and the ODA.

Another two track now, which is still ongoing policy development work. One is for in the GNSO IDN EPDP. So, as mentioned and related to the IDN Implementation Project. So, this working group has started from May 2021. And the work is underway.

Another policy related work is the ccNSO IDN CCPDP 4. This also form the working group in 2021, as well. And currently now the work is underway.

This is to note these two working groups, they have liaison between each other as requested by the board, that the two working groups should keep each other informed, so that each of them can develop the aligned policy. We have more information on this policy related during the main week as well.

And just to list here, for the work already done by the community from the SubPro, these are the few recommendations that's related to IDN. First will be about the root zone LG will be used to validate the gTLD

string and also determine its variants. And that's recommendation 25.2. Also, there's a recommendation weakly related to single character gTLDs, which are only allowed for certain scripts and it is pending on the input from the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean script community.

We also have a recommendation on the variant. So the variant gTLD allowed with the condition that the variant gTLD managed by the same registry operator and that can provide a and the variant level at the second level should be registered to the same registrants.

So that's already the last slide. So let me open the floor to Q&A. Let me see something in the chat. Sarmad, is there any online question or comment?

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

I don't see any questions pointed out or reading aloud. Let's see. There is a remark by Glenn McKnight on how often is the LGA toolkit used? Is there any metrics which are currently available?

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Sorry, Sarmad, would you repeat again?

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

Yeah, there was a comment on ... "Curious how often is the LGR toolkit used?"

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Great. Thank you for the question, Olévié. So it's actually, this LGR tool has been developed over time as well. We keep updating it. At the beginning, it was used mainly by the script community who developed the rules on LGR. So they merely use the advanced function to develop their own script LGR. So that is maybe six, seven years ago.

And then later on, we add more functionality on the IDN table review, which will be used more on the registry operator. So we have been advertised this to the Contracted Party Summit last year. And from that, we are also getting some interest in the users from that functionality as well. Thank you. Yoshiro-san also mentioned that he uses the LGR tools a lot.

And recently, we add the basic functionality ins and also integrated into the ICANN application, ICANN account system. So now is made available to anyone who has ICANN account. So hopefully, you have a chance to try the tool, play around with the basic function, then that will be something interesting to see, I would say. So please try. We unfortunately, never keep a real statistic on the usage of the tool, but that can be something we will consider in the next version. Thanks.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you, Pitinan. There's another question. "Is UNESCO aware of the existence of these LGRs?" by Olévié Kouami.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Thank you, Olévié. I'm not sure, Sarmad, if you would like to take this. ICANN Org has the MOU with UNESCO. But in the detail ... Sarmad, would you like to ... ?

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Yes. So we do provide updates to other organizations on a regular basis, but not perhaps directly to UNESCO. If you think this is good information for them, we will certainly take that up and share the information with the UNESCO. Thank you.

There is a question by Dennis Tan. "IDN registrations in gTLDs show a downward trend. It would be interesting to contrast this trend with that of ccTLDs and/or IDN ccTLDs. Is ICANN planning to do such analysis?"

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Thank you, Dennis. So, yes, ICANN is ... So we are taking a look into how can we work internally or work with the organizations, like EURID, which we also have the MOU with, to work together to find how can we obtain the number of the registration under the ccTLDs. We are aware through our coordination via the stakeholder engagement teams that they [inaudible] stable registration rate under the ccTLDs but we don't have the official number at the moment. And to your question, yes, this is something in the plan that we are looking into. Thank you for the question.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Yes. If you allow me, I'd like to add that the numbers of registrations, especially, IDN registrations are, as Pitinan was saying, hard to get,

because they were being published by IDN World Report. I think there was a source, the current version of IDN World Report, I think they're still accumulating the data. We are in conversation with them. But once the ccTLD data does become available, that kind of comparison can be done. But at this time, getting the data is not straightforward because it's not published anywhere. Thank you.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: And I think that is one question in the Q&A pod. Let me read out from Werner Staub. “Back in 2022, the ICANN’s TAS (TLD Application System) was dramatic and restful even before the Yep, sorry.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Sorry, I think that is from a probably a previous session. But yes, there is a question from Yoshiro in the Q&A pod. It says, “Please add IDNA 2008 11.0 and IDNA 2008 12.0 for validating repertoire.” That comment is in the context of the LGR tool.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Thank you. This is well noted. All right, do we have any other question or comment?

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Give it maybe one more minute to see if there is any last questions. So there's a question on by Olévié. “Are there any sessions about IDNs during ICANN76?”

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: For ICANN76, this time we do not have the IDN session. Some of the session is ingrained into the universal acceptance sessions which we have quite a few there.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Right. But there are some sessions which are being organized by GNSO on the discussions on the IDN expedited policy development process. And there may actually be also a discussion within the ccNSO around the ongoing work on IDN CC policy development process [efforts.] So those may be related sessions which are being organized within the community. But as Pitinan said, there are no sessions being organized by ICANN directly, ICANN IDN Program team. Thank you.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Thank you, Sarmad.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: So we don't see any more questions. So the details being posted about the GNSO's IDN EPDP working sessions in the chat. Kindly note in case you are interested.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA: Thank you Ariel for sharing. Okay, hearing no other comments or question, I guess we can conclude the session.

Thank you very much everybody for joining and hope you have a good rest of your day. Thank you and see you in Cancun if you're traveling. The meeting team, you can stop the recording. Thank you.

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