
ICANN84 | AGM – ccNSO: Universal Acceptance Committee meets with GAC
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CLAUDIA RUIZ

Hello, and welcome to the joint working session of the ccNSO Universal Acceptance Committee and the GAC Universal Acceptance and Internationalized Domain Names Working Group. My name is Claudia Ruiz, and I along with my colleague, Joke Braeken are the participation managers for this session.

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With that, I will now pass the floor over to Abdalmonem Galila, Chair of the UAC. Thank you.

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ABDALMONEM GALILA

Thank you very much. Good afternoon, everyone who are here. Good morning or good evening for the participants who are online. It is a pleasure to welcome you to this joint session between the ccNSO Universal Acceptance Committee, UAC and GAC Universal Acceptance IDN Workgroup. Our shared goal is clear, to promote a more inclusive and multilingual internet through the use of universal acceptance and the adoption of internationalized domain names, IDNs.

Today, our collaboration reflects the importance of aligning technical, operational, and the policy efforts across communities. As country code operators and the government representative, we each play a unique role in driving progress for more universal acceptance adoption. The session is to explore opportunities for coordination to enhance UA readiness and to strengthen the UA related efforts across both communities. After this, we will discuss the practical next steps together. Thank you for being here, and I look forward to a productive discussion.

Before we dive into the discussion, I am pleased to introduce our presenters for today's session. Each one from them will bring valuable insights from their respective communities and areas of expertise. First, we will hear from Regina Fuchsova. I hope I pronounced the name well, from EURid, representing the ccNSO Universal Acceptance Committee as Vice-Chair, who will provide us

an introduction about Universal Acceptance Committee and its activities.

Next will be me, Abdalmonem Galila, from NATRA of Egypt, representing the GAC UA-IDN Work Group and provide an introduction about the work group as well as sharing some insights about how can GAC help promote universal acceptance.

We will also be joined by Mr. Sami Mohamed Ali from Bahrain TRA. The ccNSO appointee to Universal Acceptance Expert Work Group who will share updates on the group's activities. Thank you to all our speakers for being here. With that, I will hand over to our first presenter for today, Regina. Regina, the floor is yours.

REGINA FUCHSOVA

Thank you very much. Let me briefly introduce you the ccNSO Universal Acceptance Committee. This group was established in the second half of 2023. And maybe we can go to the next slide. I think there was a small overview of the main fields. No, it's already the GAC UA. Okay, perfect. Thank you very much. So as per its terms of reference, the purpose of this committee is to provide the ccTLD community a platform where people can interact and share information obviously on universal acceptance topics and the acceptance of IDNs.

And also, the group shall liaise with other groups under the ICANN umbrella. The topic of inclusion and multilingual internet is not relevant only in the context of these process which is now a day like

this year especially, very intensively discussed, but also, in the context of sustainable development goals under universal acceptance. This topic resonates also on the IGF and local IGF platforms.

Information sharing, which is one of the main purposes, includes a session on universal acceptance readiness and practices which we have been running. Also, communication and cooperation with other ICANN groups. So, today, it's one of good examples of this coordination and cooperation. And also, we have been following and presenting ccTLDs and their case studies and also, we have a repository.

We will share the links to the resources at the end of the session as one of the follow-ups and the call for action for participants and our ccTLDs. Thank you very much. We can go to the next speaker.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Thank you very much, Regina, for this executive overview about universal acceptance committee. Now it is my turn, wearing the other hat of GAC UA-IDN work group as the chair of the work group. Actually, before diving into the details about the introduction about UA-IDN work group, I want to highlight that multilingualism, digital inclusion, and universal acceptance are the key pillars toward this additional inclusive and multilingual internet where anyone in this world, whatever the language, whatever the script,

whatever the location could access, use, and benefit from the internet.

So, for UA-IDN work group, the GAC UA-IDN worker group was formed within the GAC advisory committee since ICANN66 at 2019. And the main focus is to ensure all domain names, all email addresses in every language and script can be used and function properly across the internet. This is essential for building a truly multilingual and inclusive digital space. And the main goal also about establishing of GAC UA-IDN work group is to better monitor and engage with and give perspective on issues related to universal acceptance and the use of internationalized domain names for the internet ecosystem.

The IDN work group supports GAC by the first important ones that providing governmental insights and feedback on universal acceptance and IDN-related matters when they arise in ICANN progress. Liaise with other communities, other stakeholders, as you know that universal acceptance promotion is a multistakeholder effort. Not just ccTLDs, not just ccNSO, not just governments. And also, developing a term of reference and annual working plan, which were reviewed and introduced by GAC members. Next slide.

Actually, GAC membership will have around 182 government representative, and also, will have more than 40 observer organization within the GAC. So here, we have for the membership, we'll have 52 entities from government and observer organization

within the GAC involved with the GAC UA-IDN work group. And these 52 entities representing 78 members of GAC UA-IDN work group, they are representing 52 entities and they represented the five ICANN regions.

Of course, our terms of reference is published here. You could click on that and see what is going on behind the establishment of GAC UA-IDN work group. Through the cooperation with other communities—next slide, please.

No problem. Through the collaboration with other ICANN communities, technical groups and stakeholders, we aim to strengthen the role of government in driving universal acceptance forward and encouraging greater participation from countries around the world.

One of the examples that GAC can help to promote universal acceptance or promote inclusion of universal acceptance in standards and regulations. I don't know what is the slide, but it will go.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE

We don't know where Zoom is.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Yeah, I already closed.

CLAUDIA RUIZ

Yeah, it's not just us. It's a building-wide issue.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Yeah, no problem.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE

Just proceed if you can.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Yeah, okay. The other example for how government or how GAC can help to promote universal acceptance is to encourage national government to adopt universal acceptance policies, software awareness and capacity building. And also, promote universal acceptance in multilingual internet access initiatives and to foster international coordination.

At this time, I would like to hand the floor over to Mr. Sami, who is the ccNSO appointee to the Universal Acceptance Expert Group. Sami will share with us some updates about the expert group's recent activities and highlight what is going on for more adoption of universal acceptance. Sami, the floor is yours.

SAMI MOHAMED ALI

Thank you, Abdalmonem. Good afternoon, everyone. This is Sami Ali for the record from Bahrain .bh. And I am the Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group representative from ccNSO. So, I would just like to give you a quick brief on what's happening and what is Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group and how it's

supposed to develop and promote universal acceptance among the different sectors and among different countries. Next slide, please.

Formation of Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group was in August 2025 and it is within the ICANN's 26-30 2030 strategic plan by developing guidelines on how to collaborate with external stakeholders to promote UA adoption. Objective of the UA Expert Working Group is to develop guidelines for ICANN about how to encourage and collaborate with stakeholders towards UA adoption. There are 11 members in the UA Expert Working Group. Five represent advisory committees and supporting organizations and six are appointed from the ICANN board.

The plan currently is to develop guidelines that will form the adoption and the practical work that will take on from March 2026. And there's a link where you can read more about the UA Expert Working Group. I will be sharing it in the chat if anybody wants to check that. Claudia, can we go to the next slide?

So, as per the current charter of UA Expert Working Group, we have identified the following points. The engagement is with the big tech organizations, open-source communities, development professionals and system administrators, DNS industries, including gTLDs and ccTLDs and registrars, hosting providers, public sector and intergovernmental organizations, academia.

So, we have completed five of the 10 topics that are mentioned above. And the plan is to complete the discussion, build the

guidelines and work on practical solutions that can be implemented across the world to promote universal acceptance. If anybody wants to get more information, I'll share a link of the charter and the Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group details. You can follow that and get more information. Thank you. Abdalmonem.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Thank you very much, Sami. Actually, UA Expert Working Group continues the work that was done by Universal Acceptance Steering Group and go for more technical adoption for universal acceptance. And they characterize the scopes for the work for the activities within UA Expert Group into different scope. I think we are discussing the fifth scope at the moment related to what's said by Mr. Sami, that for big tech organization and other items that was displayed on the screen.

Actually, at this time, during ICANN82 and ICANN83, we took a closer look at what really motivates ccTLDs to move forward with the universal acceptance. And also, what are the challenges or barriers that are still holding them back? To tell us more about those insights, I will now hand it over to Regina again. Regina, the floor is yours.

REGINA FUCHSOVA

Thank you very much. If we can have the next slide.

Let me briefly recap one part of the previous work of the Universal Acceptance Committee, which was done during the ICANN82 and 83 sessions, where we ran a service and consultations with the ccTLD members about the drivers, but also, barriers for universal acceptance readiness and the adoption of IDNs.

When it comes to drivers, actually, the thing which motivates ccTLDs to deal with this topic and move forward is stable over three years based on a previous service, and it's the support to local communities. So, this is the most important driver or motivator. Other motivators include digital inclusion in different forms and also, national policies. There is a link to digital transformation in individual countries, and here, the importance of the role of local governments steps in.

Also, we found out that countries with more languages, it's not surprisingly, they find more relevant the topics about universal acceptance and IDNs. And also, one of the questions was, if the ccTLDs plan to expand their efforts in these fields, and this was seen positively by the majority, it was some 3.8 out of 5 on the scale where we asked about this.

So, digital inclusion as the main topic here, and then also, we had a look at the barriers and there is a report available on it, where we identified three main fields. One was the lack of demand, which included not only lack of awareness, but also demand from local communities. Also, the deeply rooted habits of users to use English or only Latin alphabet online. Then the second group was lack of

technical solutions. And the third group was the internal focus of ccTLDs, which included lack of funding, technical expertise in universal acceptance, but also dependencies of different kind on third parties.

Combining the findings of these two consultations, one of the outcomes was the intervention or cooperation, or the importance of intervention or cooperation with governments to promote IDNs and universal acceptance. And also, based on these consultations, we identified the three key fields which we would like to explore further today and where we would like to get input for further work. Thank you very much. If there is some question, of course, we can deal with it.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Yeah. Thank you, Regina. Do you have any question here or online? Any question, any comment to any one of the presenters? None. As I said, at the start of the session today, it's a working decision. The main goal is to explore the opportunities of coordination between two different communities, GAC and ccTLD. So, it is the time to start working for this, and actually, it is the time to interact and share ideas and share information and how should it goes for more coordination between two communities. Now I will hand the floor to Bart from ccNSO UAC stuff in order to cover this point. Bart, the floor is yours.

BART BOSWINKEL

Thanks, and welcome. And unfortunately, let me—yeah, this is always a sad point. Unfortunately, this exercise working session is only for people in the room. So, bear with us during this session. I see your hand, Anil. You have a question. Go ahead.

ANIL JAIN

Thank you, Bart. Anil for the record. And sorry for raising this hand slightly later. One comment on the UA Expert Group which Sami has presented, I'm able to see the various groups who are getting attention by UA Working Group, but I'm not able to see one important group which is the civil society. So, I request Sami, in case he can take up this particular aspect in the UA Expert Group and take it further.

Now second comment about what Regina has presented about the outcome of the ccNSO USC, she says that more those countries where more languages are there are getting adoption of UA. In fact, now, if we see the whole world and internet is connecting the whole word together and it is not that a website or a domain is limited to a single country, but it is a universal asset now. Especially when AI is already around us, there is a possibility that a particular information which is in a particular language get translated or converted into another language easily by AI. And tomorrow we see that for people who are illiterate, AI can convert text into voice of their own language.

So, I personally feel that it is important for all the countries, whether there is a single language spoken or multi-language

spoken, they should definitely look at the advantages of IDN and universal acceptance and take this as a strategic goal in their government proceedings so that an inclusive society, which Abdalmonem has said initially is realized not only at the country level, but at the universal level. Thank you.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Thank you very much, Mr. Anil. Actually, UAG was one of the communities that we interact with during, I think, during ICANN82. There was a joint session between UAG and ccTLD and we already identified this barrier and this motivates. And one of the barriers was related to the government interaction, government cooperation in order to go for more universal acceptance. That is why here, we succeeded to make a connection with the communities for GAC in order to have them at one table and discuss the coordination opportunities for the future adoption of universal acceptance. Bart, the floor is yours, please.

BART BOSWINKEL

Thank you. So, again, unfortunately, the next part of this working session is only for people in the room. But bear with us, at the end of this session, you will hear the results. So, this is how it works. You see three flip charts across the room. At every flip chart, you see a title. One is policy, meaning policy leverage. The intention is that people who initially want to discuss—and policy leverage is the, I would say, the interaction between—this is all about the interaction between governments and ccTLDs. How policy

leverage could raise UA and UA awareness, and that's the discussion point.

Regina will introduce the topic. Joke will take notes. And then after 12 minutes, we'll start a second round. And if you want to change to another topic, then you can move around. We'll have a few minutes to move around.

In this corner, you see, is the topic of technical adoption. And again, how say the cooperation between governments and ccTLDs could increase leverage, technical adoption. So, that's the topic in this corner. Again, this topic will be introduced by Abdalmonem, and I will take the notes. So, after the meeting, the notes are available.

And in the far corner over there, in the back, the topic is really about how the cooperation between ccTLDs and governments could increase capacity building. That's a topic that will be introduced by Sami and Natalie will take the notes. And again, after 12 minutes, we'll go for round two.

Let me explain the rounds a little bit more. So, everybody in the room is invited to go to one of the flip charts and have an initial discussion facilitated by Regina, Abdalmonem or Sami. And after 12 minutes, you'll be asked, say, to change or stay, but at least say, go to a next station. If you want to stay, of course, you can stay and in the second round, we'll build on the results of the first round just to see if there are insights, et cetera, based on the initial discussions. Again, that will be captured as well.

If you think or don't feel comfortable doing, you can stay where you are, but you are kindly invited to really actively participate, share your views, ask questions whatsoever at each of these meeting points. So, I'll give you a few seconds, and including ICANN staff is, of course, invited to participate actively as well at each of these meeting points.

So, if you stand up and go to one of the flip charts. So, Regina there, Abdalmonem here, Sami over there. I'll give you a few seconds to move over to one of the flip charts and the topics you want to discuss initially, and after 12 minutes, you are requested to go to another one. So, please make your pick. Go somewhere, go to one of the topics. What do you want to discuss first? Yeah. Just a minute. Not everybody is already at one of the flip charts.

And please distribute a little bit evenly because otherwise—so Sami feels alone. Abdalmonem feels alone. And if you don't feel comfortable, then you can move to another one, so please join. Seda, Pitinan, Sarmad, please. Yeah, make your pick. I'll give you five. No, 15. I'm counting now. Sarmad, if you go to that one. Yeah, that's policy. This is technical adoption, and that's capacity building. If you make your pick, after 12 minutes, you go somewhere else.

And we need some more people over there. They're not interested in technical there. Yeah, in the next round. Okay, okay. Okay, we count four, three, two, one, go. Go ahead, introduce it.

CLAUDIA RUIZ

One minute left, everyone.

BART BOSWINKEL

As you can see, we've reached the end of the 12 minutes. If you want to continue the discussion in round two, you can stay on. Otherwise, you're invited to go to another flip chart and have a discussion and the results and see if you see something emerging. So, we'll pause. Thank you. Nobody's listening to me. I can do the other way. Time, time, time. Switch. You can stay if you want to, but at least go to another one.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE

You can stay if you want to, but at least, go to another one.

BART BOSWINKEL

Switch in principle.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE

Thank you.

BART BOSWINKEL

Sami, please close the discussion now. You continue, yeah. Everybody wants to continue? Okay, then it's fine. Then we continue. We will continue with this group. So, counting down, two, one, please continue.

CLAUDIA RUIZ

Okay, everyone, time's up. Yes, time's up. Thank you.

BART BOSWINKEL

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. I hope you enjoyed it. We go to the final bit. Abdalmonem, Regina and Sami, just in two—say, the sound bite section, can you summarize what was discussed in one minute? Yeah. They want to—you're too popular, Sami. Sami, can you summarize briefly what you discussed? And please, at the microphone. And then Regina and then Abdalmonem, and then you can close the meeting as well. And thank you all for participating, I hope you enjoyed it.

SAMI MOHAMED ALI

Claudia, should I start? Yeah. This is Sami Ali for the record from Bahrain. And just to summarize the capacity building discussion we had, there were seven points that were highlighted by the team. Government education is something that a lot of countries would like to work on in terms of educating the government itself on what universal acceptance is, and what needs to be done to promote it, and how it will benefit the cultural aspect of the country itself.

So, the round two or the discussion in terms of working towards educating the government was to collaborate with internet societies and other bodies around the internet and make them do workshops and discussions with the government and make them

work on policies that will impact the internet governance in general and improve the adoption of universal acceptance.

Second point was about the academia and schools. So, the adoption of universal acceptance curriculum or similar sessions that can promote universal acceptance curriculum, not entirely, but some parts of it because a lot of universities have a fixed curriculum. So, they might not be looking at adoption on the whole thing, but some parts of it that will be very useful. And they would like to know about more case studies. So, I think this is something that in UAC as well as in Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group we will be working on and promoting the case studies from around the world.

Cultural impact, so there should be a lot more local content that should be promoted in terms of increasing the awareness, and universal acceptance awareness should be done mainly in local content, so it's more clearer for the people to understand what we are talking about.

Language use is also another thing like our colleague from Russia. He just shared that 93 percent of the people in Russia speak in Russian. So, this is something very useful when it comes to Russia and the use of universal acceptance. So, that's one of the use cases that can be supporting this whole program. The benefits that it can give to the end-user in terms of understanding of the content, understanding of the information that is being shared with them through this platform is something we will look at.

And security. Security was something that is—the example that was shared was the understanding. If somebody is entering a wrong domain name like google.com, their spelling is wrong with three Os. So, this is something that can be resolved easily when it comes to—it's done in their own language. So, universal acceptance can be promoted using that security aspect.

And the last one was the value addition from ICANN, from other entities like internet societies to do with tech support, have more technical solutions available, better adoption. So, these were the seven points that were shared in terms of capacity building and how to promote universal acceptance and adoption. Thank you.

BART BOSWINKEL

Thanks, Sami. Any questions for Sami? Comments? None? Regina, please go ahead.

REGINA FUCHSOVA

Thank you. So, this was the policy leverage group. In the end, we came to the conclusion or the conclusion was that the universal acceptance, first of all, and the idea that they need a definition here. The work with UNESCO was mentioned. I don't know if I am turning. Maybe even it's not heard that well, so. Yes, I would like to, but it's mounted. So, the definition is the first step. Also, technical standards and their alignment with international standards.

So first of all, clear definition, then a policy at a high level. Perfect. Thank you. Thank you very much. Is it switched on? Yes, super.

Then it should be part of the high-level policy on a country level, which should consist of three parts, awareness, second, capacity building and third, technical implementation. And here it's the space interesting for ccTLDs as well. And this high-level policy should be somewhere anchored in some part of body or a government agency, whatever is relevant for each country, which should be monitoring and owning the implementation of this high-level policy. Also, in cooperation with ccTLD.

And there should be also a set of indicators like data to monitor the progress. And also, a clear framework. Then this high-level policy then would translate into concrete measures, such as what was mentioned with IDN emails are used by officials, domain name website as well, that it's a part of procurement process. For example, if software or applications are being purchased, that it's mandatory to take into account universal acceptance aspects.

And then also, it was discussed like the scope of implementation, which should be limited to official languages for also practical and different reasons. And the role of ccTLDs should be the technical support, and also, the support of the overall process. I think that's it. Thank you very much.

BART BOSWINKEL

Thank you. Are there any questions for Regina? None? Then let's go to Abdalmonem. Abdalmonem, the floor is yours.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Thank you. Thank you, Bart. Actually, for the topic of technical adoption, universal acceptance, technical adoption, we identified four main areas here. With the first one, systems and application. Second one, email address internationalization. Third one, testing and validation. Fourth one, standards and the guidelines. We combined both the first one and the fourth one, systems and applications that follows the standards and the guidelines. This is the first thing, and we are sure and we recognize that systems and application that apply on the guidelines are the key towards universal acceptance adoption.

And we are thinking also about interoperability between different application. I mean, maybe one of the application at one of the countries could accept such kind of domain name and email addresses, and the other communicating website or other destination could be able to do that. So, we need to resolve these issues that are related to interoperability. Just a second. So, okay. Dr. Sarmad suggested that, or the group suggested that we need to identify a clear idea. Why universal acceptance? Why does it matter? What are the benefits for all of us in order to go for universal acceptance? Starting from government to affiliated organization, ccTLDs and other different stakeholders within the local community and from there to international communities.

We need to identify the motivation aspects. We need to clear idea. We need to have a technical roadmap that are relaxed. What I mean by relaxed here? Maybe one of the countries like UK as mentioned by Alejandra, that they are only speak English. Why do they need to

have universal acceptance? Why do they need to accept IDNs or email address internationalization? Actually, there is application like eVisa. We recognize one of the—like eVisa. UK eVisa, you could go online and add your internationalized email address or use the domain name that is not ASCII in order to access this website. We need to identify all of these.

We need also to ask the government to set up a task force, something like task force, in order to further the adoption of universal acceptance. Also, we need to align with the government and to apply standards as a first step. Maybe one of the government, who don't need to adopt universal acceptance, but at least, it adopt the standards that are related to universal acceptance adoption and IDNs.

Other side, we need to say that, we need relaxation of the universal acceptance adoption as I discussed before. We need to reach out. We need the government to reach out to the big tech providers in order to announce the need for universal acceptance. Especially, we have good practices or good examples for adopting universal acceptance or adopting IDN or AI. Like we have India, we have more than 10 million email addresses, email address internationalization that are already up and online there.

We have Russia that have, I think 50 percent have AI addresses alongside ASCII email addresses. It's one of the big example. Government should have the most [popular] application to be universal acceptance ready. So, the government will assist the

most [popular] application, most [popular] e-government applications that are already published for online citizen, whatever they are at local community or international communities to make it universal acceptance ready. That's all from the Technical Adoption Working Group. Thank you.

BART BOSWINKEL

Thank you. One of the things we've been missing and then I'll stop is effectively round three. And round three is the most interesting one in a sense is, okay, we have this result from brainstorming and what we do next. How can we use the results to achieve what needs to be done? That's something for the working group to find out. Maybe both the [inaudible] IDN-UA Working Group, but definitely the UAC. So, the results will be shared and be available. You saw us taking notes. We'll share the notes and they will be made available as well. That ends this session. Back to you, Abdalmonem. Close it.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Yes. Thank you, Bart. Actually, we are away from the end of the session by 16 minutes, but I would like to remind you that there will be a satisfaction survey. I think you need to fill it in in order to enhance our activities and in order to go for more and more popular survey or sessions to interact and share information between all of us. Thank you very much. Thank you for participant. Thank you for all of you. Thank you very much.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]