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Running a gTLD on a ccTLD infrastructure

A case of ZA, dotAfrica & other gTLDs

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In this presentation

Understanding ZA environment

ZA, dotAfrica & other new gTLDs

Where are we now?

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Understanding ZA environment

Statutory mandate

ECT Act: ZADNA is responsible for:

- Namespace management & administration
- Licensing, regulation & standards setting
- Domain name policy development
- Education & awareness
- Research, surveys & investigations
- Ability to make relevant regulations (s68 of ECTA)
- ZA domain name dispute resolution

Current priorities

- Registry infrastructural improvements
- Regularly increasing Brand ZA's market share
- Improving stakeholder & customer relationships
- Building a domain name centre of excellence
- Investment in local DNS skills development
- Strengthening Africa's domain name community
- Focus on Internet policy, standards & governance fora

Current landscape

Infrastructural upgrades on the way

- Introduction of locally developed co.za EPP system
 - Co.za already on
- Appointment of Central Registry
 - Conversion of UniForum into the CR
- Accreditation of EPP registrars
 - +66 local & international registrars already accredited
- Migration of other 2nd level domains into the CR
 - Net.za, org.za, web.za

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ZA, dotAfrica & new gTLDs

AfTLD's dotAfrica project

Jan 2011: AfTLD Board decides practical way forward:

- An open RFP process to select AfTLD's registry partner
- Evaluation process
 - Proposals received from non-African ccTLD & gTLD operators
 - May 2011: decision made on a preferred registry partner
- July 2011: negotiations began with preferred partner
 - This was not an easy process
- Delays on AUC's requirements meant uncertainty

The role & power of AUC

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- 2010 AUC ICT Minister's decision
 - AUC to lead & own dotAfrica
- 2010 written confirmation: “nobody's been endorsed yet”
- AUC commitment to open tender process
- Delays in AUC tender requirements meant uncertainty
 - Effective positioning for bidders was a challenge
- Nov 2011: AUC RFP finally out

The role & power of AUC

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- AUC dotAfrica bid key requirements
 - Eligibility: consortia of African ccTLDs, registrars, etc
 - Clearly stated & required African ccTLD involvement
 - Key requirements:
 - Demonstrated technical registry operation experience
 - Proven sound economic & financial health of the bidder
 - Primary duties of winning bidder:
 - Operate a first-class dotAfrica registry
- Emphasis on African investment, ownership & operation

The role & power of AUC

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- AUC's requirements forced a rethink on AfTLD's side
 - AfTLD is not a registry operator & has no such experience
 - AfTLD's finances are limited to donor-funding & membership fees
 - AfTLD cannot operate a registry on its own
- A quick change in strategy was needed to avoid AfTLD & African Internet community missing out

AfTLD's dotAfrica project

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- Key questions that required quick answers
 - Do we have time to set up a consortium of African ccTLDs?
 - Can such consortium provide enough funds?
 - Do we have a ccTLD with “good-enough” technology?
 - AUC preferred African registry technology & would give substantial evaluation points for it
- Our quick consultations made it clear that:
 - Setting a ccTLD consortium would require a lot of time
 - Collecting funds from ccTLDs could take even longer

Enter ZA

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Finally, after consultation with AfTLD & African internet community....

ZADNA offered ZA ccTLD to bid on behalf of African ccTLDs & provide the requisite financial, technological & project management experience

What does ZA offer entail?

- At least US\$1.3m investment
 - More African ccTLDs can invest as well
- Usage of co.za EPP registry technology
- Cost-recovery operation by ZA Central Registry (UniForum SA)
- African ownership & leadership
 - Interim Steering Committee of African community
 - Establishment of a separate dotAfrica Foundation
 - Independent Board, AUC involvement, no ZA membership
 - Strong African ccTLD involvement in Steercom & Foundation

What does ZA offer entail? (*cont.*)

- Separate operation from ZA
 - Non-ZA dotAfrica operational machinery
 - ZA takes a back-seat
- Detailed MOU with AfTLD guaranteeing:
 - African ownership: dotAfrica must be an Africa-owned, led & operated
 - Steercom & Foundation
 - Significant investment in African ccTLD & registrar development
 - Possibility for other ccTLDs to invest funds
 - Cost-recovery operation, etc

- Letters of support received from:
 - AfTLD (subject to conclusion of MOU before ICANN application)
 - Individual ccTLDs from at least 4 Africa regions
- ZA undertakings in dotAfrica proposal
 - Provisions of MOU enshrined as undertakings in the proposal
 - Commitment to detailed MOU with AfTLD
 - Commitment to African community meeting before ICANN application
 - Took place in January 2011 (Joburg)

Enter ZA

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After an anxious wait:

The AUC announced its decision: the African community-owned, led & supported, ZA-backed dotAfrica bid was endorsed by the AUC!!!

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Where are we now?

Building dotAfrica's brand identity

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See dotAfrica branding....

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And what about other new gTLDs?

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Other new gTLD possibilities

- .durban
- .joburg
- .capetown
- ZA Central Registry to provide funding

Inevitable next steps

- Structural & operational separation of dotAfrica from ZA
- Managing relations between ZA & local city gTLDs
- Developing a national domain policy & strategy
- Participation within gNSO

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Thank you😊