IDN
3 Character & Variant Management

Seoul

October 2009
IDN Implementation Status

• With responsible rules and oversight, significant consensus to launch Fast Track process soon
  – The Board will consider launching that process at this meeting

• Additionally, significant progress has been made towards the launch of the new gTLD process, including the delegation of IDNs

• Culmination of years of work that has resolved many issues, but some difficult issues still open, among them:
  – The new gTLD 3-character requirement
  – Variant management
3-Character Requirement for an IDN gTLD

– Practice & RFC 1591 currently requires that all two character codes be interpreted as ISO 3166-1 country codes and reserved for ccTLD use

– Many languages exist where meaningful words can be represented in less than three characters, which would pose a restriction for IDN gTLDs under current rules

– Objective: determine a set of rules (an exception) so that gTLD strings of less than three characters can be registered in some cases, without interfering with the rules reserving two-character codes as specified in RFC 1591
Variant Characters and TLDs

• Variant characters occur where a single character has two or more representations, which may or may not look visually similar

• Variant TLDs are those which contain one or more characters that have variant characters

• Allowing variant TLDs may result in user confusion, while excluding them may ‘disenfranchise’ cultures that use the characters in the excluded TLD strings
Objectives for Addressing both Issues

• A working team was formed to engage with relevant language communities to:
  
  ▪ Develop recommendations to address the three-character requirement and management of variants in TLDs described earlier

  ▪ Report back with recommendations to Board and community in time for the Seoul meeting
Working Team Charter: Handling IDN TLD Variants

- Develop definition of variants as used in IDNs, i.e., what does “variant” mean as used in IDN tables (for gTLDs and ccTLDs)
- Determine whether blocking or reservation of variant TLDs is necessary to prevent user confusion
- When delegated, the user experience when using variant TLDs must be at least as good as when using TLDs without variants.
  - Determine under what circumstances TLD variants might be delegated
  - Determine responsibilities of TLD operator to whom TLD and variant(s) might be delegated
What problems do variants solve?

Delegation of variant TLDs
• will allow broader participation
  – users not familiar with variant characters
  – users can only type one of the variant characters on their keyboard
  – often one region uses only one string/character and another region uses only the variant version
• may degrade the user experience due to similarity
  – unless delegated with an aliased or bundled functionality
Short-term Solution

• Requested desired variants: reserved
  – to requesting IDN ccTLD manager
  – allocation when stable solution is found

• Not requested, un-desired variants: blocked
  – list generated by tool, based on IDN tables
  – no subsequent application will be accepted
  – need for dispute mechanism
Long-term Solution

• Enable the delegation of variants that
  – Avoid user confusion
  – Ensure good user experience

• Several solutions are being discussed