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COPENHAGEN - GAC Meeting with Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG)

Sunday, March 12, 2017 - 18:30 to 19:00 CET

ICANN58 | Copenhagen, Denmark

MANAL ISMAIL:

So I think we already have Don Hollander? Yeah, I saw you somewhere. And Ram Mohan. And Michael.

So we'll be starting immediately the universal acceptance session. And we have with us, to my left, Ram Mohan, chair of the Universal Acceptance Steering Committee -- Steering Group, and also board member of ICANN, of course. And Ram is a long advocate of IDNs and has a strong experience with universal acceptance, of course.

To my right is Don Hollander, secretary general of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group. And Don, as well, has a long history in I.T., ccTLDs and ICT for development.

And to his right is Michael Kende, senior consultant with Analysys Mason that has prepared the white paper that we get to introduce, too, in this session; right? And Michael was previously chief economist with ISOC as well.

So with this, I'll hand over to you. I'm not sure who is going to start, so -- Is it -- So Ram.

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RAM MOHAN:

Thank you -- Thank you so much, Manal. And it's wonderful to be back among friends here and to be able to talk about a topic that is really important for -- for governments, for people who use the Internet every day. Because universal acceptance is really a topic that unites ccTLDs, gTLDs. It unites people who use email addresses, because what we're really talking about is how to make sure that domain names, email addresses that are either in ASCII or in -- in your local languages, how they actually work, how you ensure that they work effectively in browsers, in applications, in email systems. And how do we help ensure that governments and policymakers understand the tremendous value and the accessibility issues and the limitations that can be introduced for the next generation of Internet users if we don't have universal acceptance as something that we bring in.

You know, Manal, you and I have worked together for many years on IDN issues, and IDNs are a good way to explain universal acceptance, but universal acceptance is larger than only the IDN piece, because it's -- the cases that -- even if the domain name is in ASCII, it's in what you would recognize as English or the Latin script, there are still many applications many places that don't actually accept it well. And that poses significant issues.

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So with that as a brief introduction, thank you for having us here. It's an important topic.

The Universal Acceptance Steering Group is not an ICANN group. It's actually a group that came together in a truly bottom-up manner. You know, folks from the community, we all got together and we said this is an important issue, and this is something that we ought to spend time and effort on. And one of the things that ICANN has done has been to provide funding and some sponsorship to help make this happen. But it really comes from the community. It's for the community. It comes from the community. And I'm really pleased that you managed to find a little bit of time in your agenda for us, Manal.

MANAL ISMAIL:

Thank you, Ram. And thank you for finding the time as well, and for an important introduction because sometimes I think the universal acceptance is misunderstood to be as only an IDN issue. But as you mentioned, it's beyond this, and also has to do with new gTLDs as well. So it's not an IDN thing only.

So Don.

DON HOLLANDER:

Thanks -- thanks very much.

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So this is a follow-up from the presentation that we first met with the GAC in Dublin some years ago. Two years ago. And I just want to -- I'm not going to go through all the things that the UASG has done, but just point out some of the -- some of the things. And then Michael Kende is going to talk about some work he's done on behalf of the UASG.

So next slide, please. Thanks.

So the UASG has a clear targeted audience for who we're trying to reach, and it is the -- we call them the doers, the directors, and the influencers, and the doers are the application programmers, so the software engineers, system architects, people who code on the computer. And you'll have them within your organizations and within your country.

The second group is the directors. These are the CIOs or the I.T. managers or the general manager for data processing. And these are the people who direct the doers as to what to do. We have a different level of communications for them. Still -- still what technical.

And the third group is the influencers. And these are the people that will influence the directors to allocate their resources to the doers to do the work. And the influencers will be the CEOs, the senior marketing officers, the senior digital officers. They will be

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ministers, senior government officials. They will be thought leaders and analysts and other influencers. So those of target audiences of who we're trying to create our information.

We've produced 13 documents in 11 different languages. And if your language isn't included, let us know and we can add that. So it's from very high-level, single-page introduction to what universal acceptance is all the way up to a 70-page, very technical document aimed at the -- at the doers.

We're working on evaluations to see how UA ready different groups of applications are. So how UA ready are browsers? How UA ready is social media and messaging applications? And how ready are things like very large email service and software providers?

And we're also working on remediation of open source programming languages. So programming languages are the tools that developers use to do their development, and we're going through some of the most popular open source languages to see if they are UA ready. And, if they're not, we're going to make them UA ready so that programmers don't have to repeat that step time and time again.

Now, one of the other things -- one of the projects that we've been working on that we've asked Michael to work on -- and I'll

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ask him to speak to shortly -- is a white paper on universal acceptance. This is aimed at the influencers and directors to give them food for thought and incentive to address the issue of universal acceptance within their engineering suite.

So the paper covers three broad areas -- the cultural, social, and economic benefit of becoming UA ready. And I've asked Michael if he can just talk at the cultural and social aspect. Michael.

MICHAEL KENDE:

Great. Thanks, Don. So, just briefly, we produced this white paper for the steering group on universal acceptance of new generic -- the gTLDs, including the IDNs.

The purpose really was to be pitched at senior level, commercial policy, and cultural audience so that it was really pitched at the people who -- at the highest level of these organizations telling them the benefits of universal acceptance.

And so, in that vein, we made it short, clear, tried to use infographics and pull out numbers so that it's very accessible. And we did it based on a number of interviews and case studies. I'll just talk about one of those here.

The focus is really on making sure that software and application owners make their Web sites UA ready. So that, if someone goes

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on and they've just gotten their new domain, whether it's an IDN or a gTLD, they want to be able to use it. And, if they can't, then there's -- the demand might go down. We look at the economics, which I won't talk about here. But people might not buy off your site if they can't use their preferred or their own email address.

But also, of course, then you start a virtuous cycle. The more accepted they are, the more people are willing to try the new domains because they won't be hearing stories about them not being accepted everywhere. So it starts a virtuous cycle of growth for the domains.

We did a number of case studies, and the one we looked at was the .BAYERN domain. This is a regional domain. Part of Germany that has a very proud regional tradition. And a group started the BAYERN name, to really highlight Web sites that are in the local dialect or about the local cultural or social scene, the sports team, the BAYERN Munich soccer team, futbol team had its own dialect in the local dialect using .BAYERN.

And they were starting to work on acceptance and feeling very positive about it, that every time they went to a Web site and said you're not accepting the .BAYERN, the changes were made

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quite quickly. And they felt that was really helping to promote the whole regional identity, which was very important to them.

We looked at other like .MUSEUM and really saw that in a country like Hong Kong, the museum there said, within Hong Kong and China, there's very high acceptance and recognition of .MUSEUM. It was recognized very early. It was made UA ready, even before the new round of gTLDs. And that's been very successful, and they compare that to other regions where it hasn't been as successful and helps them establish that .MUSEUM brand.

And then we go on to show that because language is -- you know, the language -- there's a derth of content in some of the scripts that are being addressed by the IDNs. And a big help will be to make sure that anyone who gets a new IDN can use it wherever they need to.

So that's really the areas that we looked at. We felt very encouraged that, once Web sites were told that there was an issue, it was immediately addressed. And we highlight a few more of those cases in the paper.

And I'll just wrap up saying it will be published on April 11th. I don't know, Don, if you want to say anything else about the publishing. But we're looking forward to getting it out and



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having this white paper part of the discussion of universal acceptance.

DON HOLLANDER:

Thanks very much. So the goal here is -- this is something that you can take to senior government officials, to ministers, and others in your community as to why it's going to happen.

Just to give you one brief issue, one brief example, anybody here from New Zealand? Oops. Okay. So I need to be very careful.

So New Zealand has three official languages -- English, New Zealand sign language, and Maori. And Maori uses the Latin character set with macrons.

I have a bookshop. The word for "book" in Maori is pukapuka, and the way you make it plural is na pukapuka, with a bar over the A. So I have a Web site [napukapuka.nz](http://napukapuka.nz). So it's a bookshop.

I cannot use my email address in the [napukapuka.nz](http://napukapuka.nz) domain name to engage with government, because their systems are not yet UA ready.

So I can't use it to engage with the tax department; but, apparently, I still have to pay taxes. You could work on that for me.

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I can't use it with our largest e-commerce platform. I can't use it with our largest software as a service operation. I can't use it with universities. So it's quite restrictive. And for some time I couldn't even use it to register as a member with InternetNZ who run the .NZ space. Now they fixed that for me.

But it's an issue everywhere in the world. It's an IDN issue, and it's also an ASCII issue.

So thank you for letting us be here. This was not to tell you what we're doing, really. It was to ask for your help.

And what we'd really like is for you to go back. And, when you write up your report, your travel report, we'd really like you to raise the issue of becoming -- of government departments becoming UA ready. So each government department will have an IT department, probably. Or you may have a central IT operation in your country. But we would like them to start working on getting UA ready.

We'd like you to raise the awareness of universal acceptance with your local software industry. So most countries will have some degree of software industry. Some, particularly large; others just for the local service. We'd like you to raise the issue of universal acceptance with those software industries. Or at least introduce us to them. And we can share some information.

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And we'd also like local government at a national and also municipal level to participate in local UA initiatives.

So we have a number of communities that are working on UA initiatives locally -- China, India, Germany, Thailand, Argentina, and a few others. We'd like the government IT department and the government, generally, to also participate in those initiatives.

So, Manal, that's what we would like. And in the remaining time I'm happy to answer any questions or take comments.

MANAL ISMAIL: Yes. China, please. And then Argentina.

CHINA: Thank you, Manal. And thanks to the members from the USG for coming.

I think the UA, universal acceptance, is a very important topic. And I think it is especially important for the Chinese even as users that we now have roughly 700 million users. And we still have several hundred million who can now get access to the Internet. I think the universal acceptance to make a better

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environment in Chinese in the Internet is important for those who are not users right now.

And, taking this opportunity, I want to -- in my hand, I want to show you this Chinese domain name universal acceptance report. This is a community effort to work on the universal acceptance, especially in the Chinese mainland area.

And the members in the Chinese Internet community are committed to this effort. And I think with this, we -- the volunteers in the Chinese Internet community, we can contribute to this in the future. And people from the Chinese community in this meeting are distributing this report. So this is what I want to share with you.

Thank you.

MANAL ISMAIL:

Thank you, Feng, for sharing the Chinese experience on this. Thank you.

Argentina, please, Olga.

ARGENTINA:

Thank you. Thank you for the visit and for the information provided. Do you have material in Spanish that maybe we can

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share with not only Argentina but other countries in Latin America. We are softly coordinated in the GAC. So, if you could send that to us, that would be useful.

DON HOLLANDER: Si. Yes, we have information. We have a quick guide in Spanish. We have our UA101, which is a little news article for professional societies that is in Spanish. We are going to work on UA102, also in Spanish. So yes, no problem.

MANAL ISMAIL: So yeah, CTU and Kenya, right? Okay. Go ahead.

KENYA: Thank you, Chair. I am curious about the remarks you made concerning the software industry.

And, especially from the perspective that a lot of us from the Caribbean are interested in this becoming -- providing a lot more input into the local economy than it currently does.

Right now in any contract the primary requirement is that the application works and it provides a service.

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I'm just curious as to, in your experience, how would we then encourage the local -- what is a driver? So, if I go back and recommend that we implement this type of policy, do I get pushback on additional costs? Do I get pushback on local level of effort?

Just, in your experience, what have you found when you tried to implement things like this?

DON HOLLANDER:

So I think that's a very good question. The experience is the effort is not overwhelming, but it is not effortless. So we think there's opportunities which the white paper will show that you'll be able to better serve your communities and your customers and your constituencies.

So universal acceptance -- so it's not about -- with the new domain names, top-level domain names, you have a wider choice of how you can -- your own sense of identity on the Internet.

And, if the applications that your software developers have written are not allowing me to use my sense of identity, then I will probably choose some other service provider to do that.

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The effort is not difficult. And we encourage the software industry in the Caribbean to get experience in how to do it. And then they become a resource, an early adopter, a first responder to the issue. And, if the software industry in the Caribbean is all about outsourcing to other places, then it's just another skill set that they have to help address the issue.

Does that answer the question?

KENYA:

Yeah, I agree. The concern we would have in the initial stages is, as you tried to implement this, the response that you're going to get. So the ability to counter that in a positive way would be important.

DON HOLLANDER:

Yeah. We think that there's -- so for outsourcing organizations, we think there's money there to be had. And we're seeing that already in outsourcing operations in India who are gearing up for universal acceptance.

MANAL ISMAIL:

There is a quick response from Ram Mohan as well. And then we'll take CTU. Sorry, Nigel. Sorry.

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RAM MOHAN: Thank you. It will be very brief. One of the pieces of experience is that the pushback that comes is; but we don't know what it means; but we don't know what the definitions are; it will be too hard; it will cost too much.

So one of the first things that UASG has done is to create a set of documents that define what it is, how much work there is, and provide a basic set of requirements. So, in a concrete way, you might be able to go back to those who are pushing back and say it's a defined amount of work. And it's not something that you have to create from the ground up.

Our experience is that, when such concrete information is provided, the level of opposition reduces quite significantly.

MANAL ISMAIL: Thank you, Ram. So Nigel, please. CTU.

CTU: Thank you. Thanks for the presentation.

One of the current focuses of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union is ICT for persons with disabilities. Is universal acceptance including or focusing at all on



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applications for persons with disabilities? And, secondly, when did you say that white paper is coming out again?

DON HOLLANDER:

So the second question is easier. That's April 11th.

There are four topics that use the UA initials -- universal access, universal acceptance, universal awareness, and universal accessibility.

And it's the universal accessibility that focuses on people with disabilities. Universal acceptance would be another issue that you would look at, because you want everybody to have physical access to the Internet. And how do you do that? So these are issues that we know -- in fact, all three of us know very well.

So universal accessibility is not a universal acceptance issue. Our focus is on the domain names and email addresses and make sure that they work.

MANAL ISMAIL:

Thank you, Don. So any further comments? Or questions?

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So, if not, let me thank you for reaching out to the GAC and for having the time and sparing the time to update us again on such an impressive progress.

And, before concluding, is there some contact information? I mean, like an email address or, if interested, the GAC colleagues would like to follow up on our discussion now or when they go back home and they have further questions, where can we direct those? Thank you.

DON HOLLANDER:

So the last slide in the deck gives us the Web site. So it's uasg.tech. And .TECH is a new top-level domain. And we know that it doesn't always work everywhere.

MANAL ISMAIL:

Go ahead, Ram. Okay.

So I thank you again. I thank you my GAC colleagues for staying late to accommodate this session. And thank the interpreters also for staying late with us. And for GAC colleagues, we're meeting here tomorrow at 8:00 for the working group on GAC participation in NomCom. Thank you.

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