ICANN69 | Community Days Sessions – Joint AFRALO-AfrICANN Meeting
Wednesday, October 14, 2020 – 12:00 to 13:30 CEST

GISELLA GRUBER:

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Welcome to the joint AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting on Wednesday the 14th of October at 10:00 UTC.

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With that, I'll hand the floor over to Seun Ojedeji, chair of AFRALO. Seun, over to you. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Gisella. Hello everyone. Welcome again to our AFRALO-AfrICANN session which we normally hold during an ICANN public meeting. This is also one of the ones which we are doing remotely, and it's good to see that we have a lot of people who have joined us. A special recognition to the CEO, president of ICANN, and of course, his staff who are present, and to the members of the board of directors of ICANN who are present. Thanks to members of AFRALO who have deemed it fit to attend this call, and the entire African community for actually joining this session.

We have a lot on our table. We'll try to keep to time as much as possible. But before we proceed, I would like to request if there's any comment or suggestion, addition or removal from the agenda. Going once, going twice.

Okay, seeing no hands up and hearing no voice, I will take that the agenda as presented is approved, so we move on to the agenda proper. I've done a brief introduction, welcome to us all, and of course, like I said, we normally would do this every ICANN meeting, and we have a lot of guests which we've invited for this particular one because this also happens to be the one of the AGM which we are also going to be having a very interesting topic to discuss and with a statement that will finally emerge.

Without much ado, I would then call on the chair of ALAC who I'd like to thank for also making this call to give us opening remarks. Maureen Hilyard, you have the floor.

MAUREEN HILYARD: Thank you very much, Seun. I'd welcome the African community to ICANN 69. I'd also like to acknowledge that the CEO and members of the ICANN board are here as well.

I'd like to congratulate you, Seun, and AFRALO. Once again, I note that you have another valuable output almost ready for presentation to the ALAC. AFRALO has definitely set a trend and a standard for other RALOs because of the issues you develop as a community that impact all Internet users, not only in AFRALO but extending into other global communities as well.

Your issue for this meeting and its focus on universal acceptance in Africa is another example of a positive contribution to what we're wanting to achieve in At-Large for ICANN. But your other paper during 2020 focusing on enhancing the resilience of the ICANN community in the face of issues such as the pandemic, and earlier on on DNS abuse, they all demonstrate the commitment of AFRALO to policy issues and making use of the voices, views, opinions of the members of your AFRALO community.

I congratulate you, Seun, and your leadership team for this work, and I'm hoping that it will feature among the highlights and achievements of At-Large at our session next week.

But I'm looking forward very much to welcoming Sarah to the ALAC table and Dave Kissoondoyal to my ALAC leadership team and to working with them during the next year. At this point in time, I'd really like to pay special tribute to Tijani Ben Jemaa for the brilliant service and leadership he's given to the ALAC over the years.

[I read with interest] that Tijani joined the ALAC at the ICANN meeting in Cartageni in December 2010, which by chance was my first ICANN meeting as a fellow, although I had a two-year break after that meeting trying to decide if I actually would join.

But during my second fellowship at the Costa Rica meeting in 2012, my fate was sealed. It was leaders like Tijani who actually encouraged me to sign up. And over the years, he's been an invaluable resource and a true advocate for the interest of Internet users of At-Large, and I hope he will continue to be so in the future. Thank you so much, Tijani, for what you've done for At-Large and for ICANN.

Before I go, I just want to remind everyone to complete the ICANN meeting survey that I sent out on Monday so that we can give ICANN Org a good indication of our meeting needs and concerns. AFRALO has been very vocal on these, and it's important that we actually let them know. But again, thank you all for attending ICANN 69, and I hope you enjoy the rest of the sessions At-Large and ICANN have for you. Thank you, Seun.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot for that, Maureen, and thanks, always, for making our calls, and of course, responding to our call whenever we actually ask for your presence. And of course, thanks for joining our monthly calls as well when you have the time.

I thank you very much for recognizing some of our community members who have served the community for so long, and of course, Tijani is one of the ones that we'd consider as one of the fathers of AFRALO. For us, we are glad to have him. We are always happy to have him. And of course, we are very grateful for all the contributions that he has done. Plus one to Maureen. As I move to ALAC, [but maybe it's minus one for us, AFRALO,] but at the same time, it is all the same community and we appreciate all the contribution as well while we're also welcoming Abdeldjalil to serve in that role. Thanks to our community members who have also served in one way or the other. We will still be recognizing you during the closing remarks of the session.

Now we'll move on to the guest speakers. Like I said, we have quite interested list of speakers, and I'd like to thank them once again for making our call. Without wasting much time, I will just move on to the first speaker, which is the ICANN president and CEO, Göran Marby. Göran Marby has been a great supporter of AFRALO, and in terms of the African region, he has shown a lot of interest in actually seeing that the region developed, is developing. And of course, some of the things our members will recall that there were some questions that we put to the CEO during our meeting with him, and of course, his response was

always well received, and we thank him once again for his support. Göran, you have the floor.

GÖRAN MARBY: Thank you. And first of all, thank you for inviting me. It's becoming a little bit of a tradition, I think, since I joined ICANN, to come to your meetings. I think we started doing that already when I started in ICANN, and I should then—I guess—my name is Göran Marby. Sorry about that.

We are at a point where ICANN needs especially this region to be able to further develop the users of Internet. That is one of the reasons I'm attending these calls and that is one of the reasons I, together with you, try to work [inaudible].

Sorry. Let me take a step back before I proceed. 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us. My team tells me that it's something they would like me to tell you, is that my team thinks, and therefore I think so, that you have been able to face those challenges in a very positive way and continue to work very hard and continue to make—you've done three joint statements during this time, and basically, [inaudible] because we know it's been very challenging.

Your continued engagement in what we do is important, not only to ICANN but also to all end users across Africa, and also very much for the ICANN community. And I would like to thank you for contributing with your time and your expertise during this very challenging time.

It is important that the voice of Africa is heard, not only in this community, not only in ICANN, but also really for the end users of the world.

So I read your draft statement about universal acceptance in Africa, which includes a serious recommendations for ICANN Org, stakeholders with a role of universal acceptance of IDNs, [inaudible] such as the GAC, ccTLDs and the Universal Acceptance [Steering Group.]

So I believe that the decisive Internet—Internet gets bigger when more people get connected. One of the unique things with this technology is that you're sort of a part of it. When you go offline, Internet by definition gets smaller. When you go online, Internet gets bigger. And it's in ICANN's belief system that the world is a better place the more people can get connected to it. This notion of one interoperable system where everybody can connect, it's fantastic. When people get connected, it creates magic.

One of the things I truly believe in—and I'm paraphrasing something that I think I said to you before, but it sort of explains a little bit about my commitment about this.

This actually comes out of Latin America. I was there many years ago, and another government representative told me that one of the big things with Internet is that it takes away one of the biggest burdens of being poor, access to information. If you get poor people online, that means that will take away one of the biggest problems of being poor,

because always rich people and the elite has been able to get access to information.

And where the world is today is that the elite of the world, people like me, have access to Internet, and we can understand how Internet works. And the next billion users, if you look at the UN goals, is going to be much more problematic. It's going to be different business models, different ways of connecting. And I think people are smart. People would go online to use the Internet if they see the uses for it.

But we need to make sure that they can do it on their own principles, on their turf, their own languages, language scripts. And that's where very much, I need you, and where we need universal acceptance. That's where we need IDNs.

We need to make Internet not only global but also local to be able to achieve the next billion users. That's why ICANN Org and myself—and I know the rest of the community—this is so important to us. And the importance increases every day because the digital divide that exists in the world for technical and business reasons is going to be there until we get this right.

Africa, as you noted in your statement, there are 2000 indigenous languages on the continent with 1.2 billion people who belong in different native tribes and ethnicities. That's a big challenge. But we really need you to help us. And this gets technical. By allowing users to access the Internet in their own chosen online identities and the local languages, which are non-ASCII characters and script, private sectors,

governments and civil societies have the ability to better serve communities and take advantage of the significant [inaudible].

But it's not only about business. It's about people. People are smart. They want to see a real benefit form taking an investment and use money to go online. And they have to see the locality of the Internet itself. So I want to take the opportunity to thank you for inviting us for meeting, [even if it's virtually, or rather, as you know, community anyway.]

And I said before and I'll say it again, I'm humbled about your engagement and your passion going into this, and I'm also very happy when you tell me what to do, when you have statements to me. But when it comes to universal acceptance and IDNs, I think we have a very common goal. It is about the Internet, but it's more [inaudible] about people. We need to get the next billion users online and we have to do our work within ICANN to do that. And I need your help to do that. So please continue with this and please work with us, and we can connect more people, for the beauty of it. Thank you very much.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Yeah. Thank you very much, Göran, for the remark, and of course, we shall continue to contribute our part as a community towards this, and of course, we look forward to your continued support for us on this.

We'll then move on to the ICANN board members. We have the presence of the vice chair of ICANN board, León Sanchez, who actually

is kind of an AFRALO member because he makes sure to join our meetings and our calls, monthly meetings every time. And of course, he's always available for us at AFRALO. And of course, we really thank him for joining this call. So, I take it from León first. León, you have the floor. Thanks.

LEÓN SANCHEZ: Thank you very much, Seun. Yes, you're right, I'm also part of AFRALO. I always have AFRALO in my heart and in my soul. So I'm very grateful, again, to be here with you. I really look forward to the time in which we can go back to meeting face-to-face and I am able to say hello to you in a face-to-face setup. But for the time being, this is what we have, and we have to take advantage of this moment.

So I also want to second Maureen's words in praise of Tijani. I personally admire Tijani and he has been an example and an inspiration to me. So, thank you, Tijani, for all your work, your dedication, and the many generations of ICANN community members that you have led and that you have raised through the years. Thank you very much, Tijani.

Now, back to the main topic of the session, which is universal acceptance. Of course, I second Göran's words. I agree with what he has said. I also read the statement. As you know, I follow AFRALO's activity closely, and I think that you always touch on very important and interesting topics. This one being universal acceptance, I want to share with you that we have an Internal board working group that focuses on universal acceptance.

There are actually some members of that working group here in this call. I see of course Mandla is present, also Akinori Maemura is present here, and we also have other board members with us, of course Ihab and Avri are also joining us in this call. So I thank you all for attending this important session.

One of the things that I would like to highlight about the statement that you have so carefully crafted is that it takes into account different layers of our ecosystem. I see that you are issuing recommendations for ICANN as an organization, but I also see that you are referring to the UASG, the Universal Acceptance Steering Group and its members, of course, but also the wider array of stakeholders. And I think this is very important to be included and encompassed in your statement, because it shows and embodies the very essence of the multi-stakeholder model by which we work and by which we guide our actions within the ICANN community. So it is, again, remarkable that you have thought of including the different actors within the ecosystem.

I of course am not a stranger to the challenges that universal acceptance poses. Myself, being in Latin America, I have also suffered the consequences of not having a universal acceptance widely spread. So for example, day to day things that we do on the Internet that we cannot use our own language in many ways, or for example, you mentioned the e-mail acceptance as well. That is something that we definitely need to work on.

And as Göran was saying, we cannot do this without you. I thoroughly and truly believe that the strength of our community is exactly the members in each of the regions and the different ALSes and the way we can have the numbers and the efforts to this topic and trying to foster and to push for universal acceptance to become widely adopted.

So I commend you for your statement. I definitely support the statement, and I support the work that you do, not only within the ICANN community but back home with each of your communities, with each of the ALSes that form the AFRALO and the AfrICANN community. And of course, as usual, feel free to reach out to me. You know I'm always just a click away from you, and happy to contribute and happy to support every effort that we can endeavor in order to connect the next billion people, as Göran was saying. So thank you again for having me here. I don't want to take much time. I think it's more important for you to discuss the statement than for you to hear what I have to say about it. So I will try to of course contribute to the discussion as it develops, but in the meantime, just letting you know, Seun, that I'm very proud to be part of the AFRALO community as well and that, as usual, I support the work that you're doing. And congratulations to you as well, Seun. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks, León. And of course, we're always glad to have you. We have members of the ICANN board from the Africa region, Mandla and Ihab. We'd also like them to give a few remarks. And of course, I recognize

the other board members on the board as well, vice chair of the ICANN board, as mentioned. Thanks a lot for joining the call. And of course, I see Avri on the call as well. [Avri always see] interest in end user and of course, she participates in some of At-Large's interests. So, I'd like to thank Avri and the rest of the ICANN board members who are on the call as well. So I'll quickly now ask Mandla, or is it Ihab? Whoever wants to take the floor first. You have the floor.

MANDLA MSIMANG: I guess I'll take the floor. Thanks, Seun. Thank you. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to some. I'm happy that I'm speaking in the middle of the day, the time that works for most of us in Africa, and I'm sure that my colleagues on this call, which seems to be very well attended, who are based in Africa, feel the same. Sometimes those early morning or late night calls don't work so well for me.

So unlike last time when I practiced my French, I think I'll stick to English this time around, and I'll start by thanking you really for the invitation to briefly address AFRALO today, and t yes, Seun, for always inviting us to each of the AFRALO sessions. I think you've invited me to each one since I joined the board, unbelievably almost exactly a year ago. And in that year, as has been said by previous people, there's been a lot of work that I've seen come out of AFRALO, which his really an important part of the community for me personally, and obviously for the board as a whole. The work that has been done, I think Maureen was the first to say it, but it really has been impressive.

For me, in the broader ICT space, one of the areas that I've always had a keen interest in is universal service and universal acceptance, basically ensuring that as many people as possible are connected to the Internet and that they connect in an affordable manner, Internet is available for everybody.

So naturally, now as a member of the ICANN community, ICANN board, universal acceptance is a really keen area of interest for me, and I've recently just joined for the upcoming year the board working group that's dealing with this matter and which is chaired by Akinori who's present here today.

So, as we know, universal acceptance is a key principle that we should ensure is upheld in the interest of ensuring inclusivity and encouraging the next billion, many of whom will come from our own continent, to connect, and not just use the Internet but meaningfully use the Internet. And given the diversity of languages in our continent, our desire for a digitally inclusive Internet, I'm glad that AFRALO has made this topic a priority for ICANN 69, and I'm really looking forward to hearing your views on the way forward on this very important matter.

I think there's no need to preach to the converted about how we should all be treated equally on the Internet, and that includes all the new TLDs, IDNs, e-mail addresses and the whole scope of applications, devices and systems available to us.

And for me, what's particularly important is, amongst other issues, this should be regardless of the scrip that we're using, whether that's

Arabic, whether it's Amharic, or any of the other 2000 languages that are mentioned in your statement that are used on our continent.

And I think that will be meaningful to facilitate a consistent and positive experience for all Internet users. So I know that this is obviously a key topic for AFRALO and there's obviously been a lot of effort already put into the statement that will be discussed, so like León said, I think it's more important to hear from AFRALO and engage in the debate. I'm very interested in listening to the debate. I'm so glad that there are so many participants on this call showing the importance of the AFRALO position on the matter. So, thank you again for inviting me, and I won't spend too much time, but I'm looking forward to the session. Thanks.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Mandla, and of course, good to always see your face and we look forward to seeing you again during a face-to-face meeting when it finally happens. We have Ihab. You have the floor.

IHAB OSMAN: Thank you, Seun. Thank you, everyone. I am happy to be here again with the AFRALO. It's always good to be with the group from the Africa region, of course, my home region.

You picked, I think, a critical and important area, and as Mandla has said, Akinori from the board is leading this conversation and doing a great job with that., and thank him and the other board members who joined this call.

I would like to discuss the participation of the Africa region and your participation in the ICANN community and in the ICANN multi-stakeholder model, if I take a couple of minutes.

When we look at stock markets in the world and how they value companies and they put … It's always companies are valued on their future potential. And if we look at the future potential of the Internet, it's almost entirely in Africa. A young population that is growing, that is increasingly getting connected, maybe initially with slower bandwidths and speeds, but improving over time. And COVID has changed the world, probably for good, in terms of the amount of business that is going to be done online, which is not necessarily a bad thing for our region and our continent.

This should be a big incentive for participants from our region to become super active in shaping the future of the Internet, its governance, its technical governance, and to really have a loud and clear voice. Universal acceptance, of course, it's one of those issues, but there are a number of other areas that we should be participating and becoming much louder and to have our voice heard to impact the shaping of the future.

I thank all of you again for all the work you are doing. I know it's difficult conditions and our region doesn't have a lot of the corporate sponsorships and involvement that we see in other regions that makes it easier for volunteers to participate, but there are great people who are really dedicated to this work in our region. People like Tijani for example, I cannot mention all the names, but who spent many years

encouraging participation and making our voices heard and to really impact the future of Internet and its governance.

So again, I would like to thank you all. I encourage you to keep focusing on the critical issues for us and to have one solid, clear voice to be heard well and to have a serious impact on the future and to take the kind of recognition and potential the Africa region should have in this area. Thank you all, and thank you, Seun, for the invitation. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Ihab. Thanks for your remark. We'll move now to Pierre Dandjinou. Pierre is the vice president for Africa. And of course, Pierre will be talking about, among other things, the future of AfrICANN. A lot of us are familiar with AfrICANN. It's actually basically a mailing list at the moment, and of course, this is an effort to kind of discuss what the future of it would look like. Pierre, you have the floor.

PIERRE DANDJINOU: Thank you very much, Seun. Good morning to everyone. I hope you hear me well, because we've been experiencing some hiccup in our connectivity these days in Benin.

My name is Pierre Dandjinou, and I'm the vice president in charge of stakeholder engagement in Africa. We do have a team, of course, three for GSE but also two from OCTO, meaning an essential team of five persons, and our colleagues from the Istanbul hub who are in assistance and supporting our engagement all over Africa.

Again, thank you very much for having me here, for inviting me. I would like to again comment AFRALO for what you guys have been doing. As I always say, I'm part of this, I've been one of the starters of this, At-Large, whatever, engagement, and the platform, so I'm quite happy. Also happy that we've been recognizing Tijani for what he's done. I saw Tijani come in—I won't say junior in a way, but as a newcomer, and I saw him move and climb to the leadership level that he holds today, which is quite important. And again, Tijani, thanks so much for what you provided to the At-Large community and also to AFRALO specifically.

With that, I just wanted to share a few words with you on the future of AfrICANN. One of our board members was talking about the future, so we'll be talking about the future. But before that, again, commending you but also informing you that as far as the topic of your statement is concerned, we are happy, as GSE Africa, to have already started actually work with the UASG and also our new colleague, Mohamed, on this, to see how best to start what we call local initiatives from Africa as related to universal acceptance and the IDN, which means that some work is being done on the ground and we'd basically like to increase and improve what we've been doing.

Now, to the point, AfrICANN. What we do of AfrICANN, as you said, AfrICANN is supposed to be—if you go back to the history, the whole idea of having an Africa voice within ICANN was there since 1998 from our first meeting on Internet governance in [inaudible] where most of the Internet-related institutions have been actually thought about and incepted. Bear in mind, AFNOG, AFRINIC, AFREN, all of them, we call

them AF Stars. But in fact, the idea when ICANN was instituted in 1998, was to have also an African voice within ICANN. So it's important to understand those things.

Now, why talk about formalizing AfrICANN today? That's certainly one of the questions people are putting to us. Well, we believe that after those 20 years, we've seen so many things happening, and we are glad to have for instance AFRALO which is quite on top of what it has to deliver, things are happening, you have a newsletter now, you're presenting and producing statements to the board, which is quite good.

We're also seeing a few others, be they ccTLDs from Africa and others from the GNSO, although we still need to have more and more important new participation from the business components from Africa. And also, we do have GAC members. All of this is quite fine.

But we also understand that your contribution is again a bit of [inaudible], meaning if you come back to Africa, ccTLD will be just talking among each other. There's no, really, kind of governing African level to talk about ICANN per se, apart from some of the meetings that we as GSE will be analyzing from Africa.

We're also thinking about then the importance of having an AfrICANN which is formalized, which is Africa within ICANN, and we coined that word back there to make sure that all Africans, no matter which constituency they belong to, contribute ably.

So that's where we are. This is the rationale. And what we believe here is that we want to promote the overall participation from Africa under one roof and one roof, that's to participate, champion and effectively engage in ICANN-related processes.

In other words, AfrICANN would be kind of equivalent of AF Stars. The AF Stars are the Internet-related institutions that have been set up in Africa. We call them AF Stars. So as AfrICANN has been invited most of the time [inaudible] as the Africa Internet Summit, the AIS, we thought it might be interesting to actually—or even strategic to formalize AfrICANN so that it's there.

It's not about us as ICANN staff to be talking during AIS per se. It's about a formalized AfrICANN. Of course, we do have participation from other members, for instance, AFRALO, you guys present to the AIS meeting, we have ccTLDs, AF TLDs, but we don't really have, I will say, a voice, an ICANN community voice during the AIS. So that's one of the rationales behind this team.

So far, AfrICANN only exists loosely as a mailing list where from time to time, we might post a few things. So, what we need here is—the mission for us will be of course to encourage multi-stakeholder dialog and promote greater and synchronized participation by Africans in ICANN's activities and ecosystem. We have a few objectives that are there, and as we said, this sort of communication I'm making here, we're going to take more time to really discuss with you guys and see whether this is a rationale you buy into, and how can we really implement that one.

There a few objectives. I'm not going to go through them because there are eight to ten of them. But just we want to coordinate engagement and support Africa's participation. We also want to be able to collaborate with and forge partnership with the rest of AF Stars and other regional bodies like the African Union an also the regional economic blocks from Africa.

So AfrICANN is going to be a link between African community in ICANN Org and work closely with the ICANN staff in Africa. Finally, also contribute to capacity building—that is key in Africa—by promoting best practices, encouraging regional projects within ICANN's remit, including at fora like the African Internet Summit.

Membership, we do have a few ideas that we are sharing, and bear in mind that AfrICANN [isn't] going to replace ICANN SO or AC structures that are already there and that already have members from Africa. AfrICANN cannot be [inaudible] AFRALO or even the SOs and ACs, but rather complement, synchronize and enhance Africa's participation at ICANN.

In other words, GAC members from Africa, AFRALO members, ccNSO members, individual registrar, all of them, even leaders from Africa will be encouraged to freely subscribe to the AfrICANN membership.

Governance, part of the AfrICANN for instance, we're suggesting a few things for leadership, but also secretariat. We'll go into details on that one and we'll know exactly what [inaudible] is going to be doing, and we're going to propose [funding,] mobilization strategy because it's

about mobilization. It's not just about ICANN putting all money in, this is about working to have [majority]contributors through this.

So that's what it is. We have the governance. I know there are many questions. I don't think, Seun, that [inaudible] for those questions. But anyway, just kind of rush introduction to this idea that we are flagging. And of course, we would like to hear more from the community so that we move ahead on that one.

Again, thank you very much for inviting us, and congratulations for your statements. Keep up the good work, and back to you, Seun.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Pierre, for that, and of course, I'm happy to read from [Göran] in the chat that he's happy to help in this effort. And of course, I would just echo that quickly so that we can have that noted. So thanks, Pierre, and of course, thanks, [Göran] as well. I think as Pierre said, there wouldn't be enough time to actually take the Q&A, but indeed I'm sure as Pierre has mentioned, details about this idea would also be shared with us later. And of course, during our monthly call, perhaps you can also portion time for this specific item. Thanks to everyone, but of course, you can put your comments in the chat and I'm sure Pierre and his team would be looking at the chat as well.

So we'll move on to the next agenda item, which is a remark from the universal acceptance group chair, which is Ajay Data. Ajay, you're welcome on the call. You have the floor.

AJAY DATA: Thank you very much for inviting me on this call. I am the UASG chair and I'm here to briefly talk about UA because it is a very important topic for this region.

Once again, thank you for inviting me here, and I'm going to talk about Universal Acceptance Steering Group and its initiatives we are currently undertaking.

Universal Acceptance Steering Group has a vision where we promote acceptance of all domain names and all e-mail addresses [inaudible]. And that's a simple vision. We have many working groups through which we work with the community. We have technology working group, e-mail address internationalization working group—EAI in short—measurements working group, communications working group, local initiatives working group, and UA ambassadors working group. These are the working groups. All the working groups are open for participation, so if you visit UASG.tech website, you can apply for membership and you can join any working group. Everyone is accepted.

UA readiness is effective where we see that all applications or all websites are accepting the UA principles, which means accept, validate, process, store and display. For example, if I have a Hindi e-mail address—Hindi is the native language of my state in my country. And if I have an e-mail in that script, which is Devanagri in Hindi language, and if I get that e-mail ID to sign up on ICANN website or any other website, will that website accept it? Which means, can I type in my e-mail ID there? Then will it validate it as a valid e-mail ID?

Will it process it for [inaudible]? Will it store it in databases and wherever it wants to perfectly, and when required, display that?

So accept, validate, process, store and display is the principle, and there are affected categories where we measure this in the top-level domains and the IDNs. So there are long top-level domains. Long means [inaudible] current domain name has more than three characters. IDN means non-ASCII domain names. And on those domain names, the e-mail addresses.

We have a remediation [inaudible] through which when we find a gap through our measurement, we follow a process through which the remediations happen.

[inaudible], everyone who visits UASG.tech who is listening to me, on the top first page itself, there's a report on UA readiness 2020. I would encourage everyone to please download that report and see what [inaudible] about UA readiness and what kind of efforts are required in your region, and you can institute similar kind of testing in your region and see whether you are missing out the [inaudible] which is going on, and are you missing customers who are not able to get online and missing the content, missing the websites and not able to get the benefit of Internet as such?

Just at a glance, if I can share a little bit about the readiness report, 9.7% of e-mail servers only are UA ready right now, which will support EA addresses in local language. So I'm not going to take much because you can read more on the report, but it is only 9.7%, we have a long way to go.

We have technology stacks [inaudible] in almost every application which is required right now [inaudible], whether it is Amazon.com or [inaudible] or Google and Chrome and Safari, Facebook, Twitter, JavaScript, programming languages and frameworks like [inaudible] platforms like iOS, Windows, Linux. We're working across the technology stack [improving their] standards and best practices
So IETF, W3C, Unicode, we work with all of them to bring this [inaudible] so that the gaps can be filled and we can bring in more remediation in every aspect of the readiness.

There's an e-mail system technology stack and we have been, as an example, working with Gmail, Apple, Microsoft and Yandex and [inaudible] all of them, all the famous ones are being part of our UA readiness stack and we have them giving the report where the gaps can be field, and you are more than welcome to please participate in these [inaudible].

There are some projects also. If you're part of the Discuss list, you must know that. We're also going to [inaudible] the phone which you're using right now is having a mail client, whether it is UA readiness or not. And I'm pleased to share that this time, [inaudible] UA ready, but this time, when iOS 14 came in, they have also announced support for UA readiness. With a continuous persuasion and working together, we are able to make that difference and bring it online.

So at the end, because I was given a very short time just to give a brief, I want to say that, please visit uasg.tech website, connect with us on

social media, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, we are all available, and join the working groups to make a difference in that region to bring people online by breaking the language barrier. Thank you very much.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Ajay, for that remark, and of course, we do have some of our ambassadors also in your working group, and of course, they have been giving us updates during our monthly call on progress of the working group. We look forward to continued collaboration on this important task.

Our time is fast running and I would appreciate if subsequent speakers can please not exhaust the allotted time today. Mohamed, you're welcome. Mohamed is actually our own, and of course, we're always happy to have him, and of course, this time around from the staff side. Mohamed was actually the one that I took over from as chair. So my chair, you're welcome, Mohamed. You have the floor.

MOHAMED EL BASHIR: Thank you very much, Seun. AFRALO, AfrICANN community is always good to be back here. AFRALO is really my home and I have been active there for a long time. For the record, my name is Mohamed El Bashir and I joined recently as an ICANN staff, as universal acceptance program manager in the global domains and strategy division.

So my role within ICANN Org and within the IDN and UA program department is to manage the universal acceptance program as a

strategic initiative currently for ICANN Org and support the universal acceptance working group which is chaired by Ajay Data and the community effort to advance universal acceptance of domain names and e-mail addresses globally, and especially in Africa, which is definitely, as other speakers mentioned, there is a need really to focus on universal acceptance in the region.

So last year, our focus was on launching and supporting national and regional multi-stakeholder universal acceptance initiatives. That could work at the national or regional level to raise awareness about universal acceptance to the local stakeholders, and to make a change at a national or regional level.

Currently, we have four established and active local initiatives. One in China, and there is a local universal acceptance initiative in India. There is a regional initiative in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, which is seven countries including Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Lativa, Serbia and Ukraine, and recently, Thailand has established its national universal acceptance initiative.

We're really looking forward to helping the African community to establish an African universal acceptance as also mentioned in your statement, and we're looking forward to working with you in that regard. I would like to invite you to attend the session in ICANN, in this meeting. One of them is outreach for addressing universal acceptance, which will be held on Monday 19th of October. So you can listen from the leaders of the universal acceptance local and regional initiatives,

and the ambassadors about their activities as well, which will help the community really to form its African universal acceptance initiative.

As Dr. Data mentioned, last year and in previous years, there were lots of efforts working on identifying the technology gaps, identifying and doing research about where are the problems, studying browser acceptance, looking at email systems, programming languages. And that work is really now … We are bearing the fruit of that work.

So the next step—and our effort and focus in FY 21 would be to work on remediation, which basically means trying to resolve the issues and engaging the technical community within ICANN or outside ICANN as well, try to fix the issues currently we're facing in terms of ensuring the acceptance for all domain names and e-mail addresses within the industry.

I would also like to invite you to attend the session remediating universal acceptance issues that will be held on Tuesday, 20th of October. That's an important session because you will know and listen to the working group chairs talking about the technology issues and the gaps that have been identified, and there will be a discussion about how ICANN Org and the community could work together to resolve universal acceptance issues.

So lastly, we worked closely with Africa GSE team, Pierre and the rest of the team, on rolling out universal acceptance activities in Africa, and really, we welcome your interest in the topic. Your statement has already outlined some of the activities currently we are already planning. We're looking forward to working with you to establish the

African universal acceptance initiatives, and also, working at the national level to establish universal acceptance initiatives at the national level.

Thank you very much, Seun, thank you very much, everyone, for this effort. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks, Mohamed, for that. Thanks for your invitation, and of course, we look forward to participating in that initiative, and of course, as Mohamed has said, I encourage our members to participate in the sessions that have been mentioned because it's also important for us to improve our understanding of the topic to better improve our participation in them. Thanks once again.

We'll move to the next item on the agenda, and this is where we're going to be introducing the topic, and of course, we've spent a lot of time so I would ask that Abdelmonem, Abdulkarim and Tijani should kindly stick with the time, and of course, [inaudible] discuss the statement.

So we're going to take first Abdelmonem. Go ahead.

ABDELMONEM GALILA: Thank you. I'm Abdelmonem Galila working for the Telecom operator of Egypt as a manager of .mosra IDN registry, I am wearing now two hats. The first hat as an African, second hat as universal acceptance ambassador. As you know, this statement about our vision in how to

enhance the adoption of universal acceptance in Africa, this statement has two main sections. The first section about who are we, why Africa should be [in,] short note about universal acceptance. The second section about our recommendations to ICANN Universal Acceptance Steering Group, and stakeholders which are an important part to be considered.

For the first section, the African community members who are addressing the concerns of universal acceptance project with a special focus on the status and impact on the African continent. As you know that Africa is considered as second largest populated region with more than 1.3 billion, and over 2% population yearly change. Most of this population is not native English speakers, and this can be considered as one of the main barriers to connect the unconnected.

ICANN is promoting the use of internationalized domain names and e-mail address internationalization in parallel before [inaudible] the new generic top-level domains—gTLDs. But unfortunately, most e-mail and web resources still use APIs, application programming interfaces which were developed 20 years ago and not able to handle this trend of domain names and e-mail addresses.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Sorry, Abdel, if I may, we're actually short of time, so take just the next minute to round up. It's just for you to introduce and then we'll move on. Thank you.

ABDELMONEM GALILA: Okay. Don't worry, I will be on time. So universal acceptance is foundational requirement for a truly multilingual Internet to empower the local language digital content with the new added local initiatives and the contributions, as well as help Africans to be able to use indigenous language scripts for IDNs, e-mail addresses to connect as well as being part of the end user benefiting from all Internet-related opportunities and businesses such as work of our new gTLD program.

At this moment, we agree that all Internet enabled applications, devices and systems should be able, as Dr. Ajay said, to accept, validate, store, process, and display all domain names, all e-mail addresses in whatever language script that is used locally. Thank you, Göran, thank you, guest speakers, thank you, Maureen, for highlighting that Africa should be highlighting that Africa should be part of the next billion Internet users to be connected online.

At this time, I would like to invite my colleague, Abdulkarim, to talk about the next section before going to Sarah and complete the statement. The floor is yours, Seun. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thank you, Abdelmonem. Is there any addition from Abdulkarim or Tijani?

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE: Thank you very much, Seun. No addition from my side. I think Abdelmonem has covered everything brilliantly. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks. Tijani, we'd like to hear your voice.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you, Seun. I think these young people said everything, but I'd like just to thank Maureen and the other guest speakers who made very nice words for me. So I really appreciate this because [it's recognition of] the work, and that's all. I will not take your time. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, and before we move to the statement proper which Sarah will be presenting, I'd like to thank members and our guest speakers who have actually joined the call. I note that some of them may be leaving soon. And of course, I'd like to thank them, from the president to the ICANN board members, to the ALAC chair. Thank you very much for joining this call. Please, we hope that you'll be able to stay through the call, but if you can't, it's understood. But thank you very much. Moving to the next agenda item, Sarah, you have the floor.

SARAH KIDEN: Hi everyone. I posted a link to the document on the chat because I don't think we may have a lot of time. So I'll read through it and please feel free to add comments, either during the meeting or after the meeting.

Our topic was status, impact and recommendations for universal acceptance in Africa. We the African ICANN community members participating in the ICANN 69 virtual annual general meeting and attending the joint AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting on Wednesday, 14th of October 2020 in consultation with the wider AFRALO-AfrICANN community addressed the concern of the universal acceptance project with special focus on status and impact on the African continent.

Africa is considered the largest populated region and home to about 2000 indigenous languages with a population of about 1.3 billion people who belong to different native tribes, ethnicities, and over 2% population yearly change.

Universal acceptance is a foundational requirement for actually multilingual Internet to empower the local language digital content with the new added local language initiatives and contributions. Most African citizens are not native English speakers and as such, language can be considered as one of the main barriers to connecting the unconnected.

ICANN is promoting the use of internationalized domain names and e-mail address internationalization in parallel with pushing for the new generic top-level domains. Most e-mail and web resources still use application programming interfaces that are not universally acceptable.

We also agree and believe that all Internet enabled applications should be able to accept, validate, store, process and display all

domain names and e-mail addresses in whatever language script that is used locally.

Universal acceptance will help Africans to be able to use indigenous language scripts for IDNs and e-mail addresses to connect as well as being part of the end users benefiting from Internet-related opportunities such as the new gTLD program.

To enhance the adoption of universal acceptance in Africa, we recommend the following. One, that ICANN, A, encourages African Government Advisory Committee members to be part of the GAC working group on IDNs and universal acceptance as well as discuss IDN country code top-level domain adoption to serve a population that has language barriers from being connected or served online, require national policies and industry-led measures to drive the will for UA readiness adoption, implementation and use, national standard operating procedures for adopting UA readiness and keep the application interoperable, inclusion of UA readiness within national digital inclusion projects.

B, encourages African ICANN community members to join other groups working on internationalization and universal acceptance outside ICANN for knowledge exchange and experience sharing. C, addresses and promotes the use of local language domain names to access local language content and use local language e-mail addresses to exchange data through fostering the use of IDNs and EAIs. D, encourages African communities to work on enriching online content in African languages.

Two, that the Universal Acceptance Steering Group conducts a study about the roles of different stakeholder groups such as Internet end users, software developers and providers, ccTLD operators, registrars, e-mail service operators, technical and academic communities, governments, private sector, tech-media, etc., to further promote IDNs, EAIs and Universal Acceptance.

B, supports African organizations and educational institutions that work in the field of domain names or email addresses to develop and identify the UA issues inventory and how to mitigate them, develop a widespread awareness plan about the importance of having an online presence, whether using new gTLDs or using their own local languages, conduct hands-on workshops on how to adopt UA readiness, adopting EAIs and using IDN ccTLDs.

C, encourages UA local and regional initiatives and more cooperation with the ICANN Global Stakeholder Engagement team to support the progress of IDN, EAI and UA technologies.

D, engages African open source communities and other groups of developers promoting UA projects to start the adoption of new API versions and updating the current ones.

E, support local training initiatives on UA Technologies, Internationalized Domain Names, and Email Address Internationalization.

And F, support curriculum development initiatives tailored towards creating UA awareness at universities and related educational institutions in Africa.

And three, that stakeholders encourage other stakeholders, and particularly coordinate efforts with the private sector, technical and academic communities, tech-media industry and governments to get their first step towards UA readiness by developing the repository systems and publish the UA readiness adoption policy, identify the applications that should be UA ready, modify the current systems to be UA ready, require that new developed applications and systems are UA ready, and provide guidelines and toolkits for how to make applications UA ready.

We want to thank all those who are working hard to push the Universal Acceptance project forward. We hope that these recommendations will be taken into account to make significant progress for better development of the UA initiatives in Africa. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Sarah, for reading out the statement. There you have it. I think Sarah, you can just coordinate the discussion. Thanks.

SARAH KIDEN: Okay. Thank you, Seun. So if you have any comments or questions that you'd like to raise either to the drafting team, the ambassadors,

the speakers who have spoken before or to edit the text, you have the floor. And I see Galila has his hand up.

ABDELMONEM GALILA: Thank you, Sarah. Yesterday, I think most of us received that e-mail from the Universal Acceptance Steering Group regarding inviting qualified contractors to apply for some SOW for different working groups within UASG. Why not stakeholder encouraging African contractor to join this, to be part of these contractors? Why not? It is important to exist in this working group to achieve something. Thank you.

SARAH KIDEN: Thank you, Galila. I see Abdulkarim has his hand up. You have the floor.

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE: Thank you very much. I just wanted to add one critical statement to the document which I think was from [inaudible] the previous speakers said about the next billion Internet users coming from the African region. Thank you so much.

SARAH KIDEN: Thank you, Abdulkarim. Does anyone else have comments? I don't see anything in the document. Galila, you have the floor.

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ABDELMONEM GALILA: Sorry to move away the [inaudible] as I see in the chat. Universal acceptance doesn't care only about IDNS or EAIs but care also about the new generic top-level domain names, whatever it is short or long domain name. Thank you.

SARAH KIDEN: Thank you, Galila. Thank you for the comments. I see no hands and no comments. I see some comments going on in the chat. I don't think they're related to the statement. So perhaps Seun, I can hand over to you, but before that, we are going to leave this document open. Usually, we give people about one or two weeks after the ICANN meeting, so you still have t wo weeks to add your comments and then we will send our final statement to the board and to the stakeholders. Tijani, you have the floor.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much, Sarah. I'd like to encourage the community to make local initiatives. We have very good universal acceptance ambassadors who can help in this matter, and I think that the steering group is doing very good work and they are helping a lot. So it is a way to advance or to make the universal acceptance in Africa more efficient. Try to make local initiatives. This is a good way to achieve that. Thank you.

SARAH KIDEN: Thank you, Tijani, and thank you for your contribution during the statement drafting. So Seun, back to you. Thank you so much.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Sarah. Thanks for all the people who have also contributed to this statement. The thing is we try as much as possible to move first to some extent and get to the point where we have enough time for discussion, and during discussion, we realize that we have enough time left.

So I think we have ten minutes before the end of this call, so it gives me enough time to actually do what I'm about to do now, which is to actually recognize the members of our community who are finishing their term in their respective roles. I see Tijani's hand is up. Tijani, you have the floor.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: It was an old hand. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Oh, cool. Thank you. So thanks once again to all those who have worked on this call and those who contributed, and as I said, I'd like to recognize those who are moving to the next task or next role and those who are just finishing their role.

I'll start from Hadia. Hadia has been a NomCom representative, served the community, and she continue to serve the community. So I'd like to just recognize her and thank her for all her contribution. And of course, if Hadia was to take a minute to speak, I would like to give her the floor.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you so much, Seun. I'd just like to thank everyone here in the community for supporting—

YESIM NAZLAR: Hadia, I'm sorry for interrupting, but we have very faint audio for you. Is it possible to arrange your microphone?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Apparently not. I will just type in the chat. I'm just thanking everyone. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Okay. Thanks a lot, Hadia, for your comment. And of course, I see in the chat Calvin Browne. You have the floor, Calvin, if you want to speak.

CALVIN BROWNE: Yeah. Hi guys. I was just making a comment in the chat that some of the domains that I'm involved in, [longer] domains, [inaudible] and so forth, I haven't seen any UA [complaints] [inaudible] those domains for a while. So just a comment. Obviously, there's been some progress made on that thing. In the beginning, when it first launched, there were issues, but it's been a long time since I've had any comments [inaudible].

SEUN OJEDEJI: Okay. Thank you for your intervention. So we move to the next person, which is Sarah Kiden. Sarah Kiden was staff of AFRALO in the sense that she was one of the officers of AFRALO, and of course, she was a big contributor to our work as AFRALO leadership. The role of secretariat is very critical to the work of AFRALO and she contributed immensely to it. So I'd like to give Sarah a minute to also speak.

SARAH KIDEN: Hi everyone. So this is my last meeting as AFRALO secretariat. I'd just like to say thank you to everyone, to AFRALO leadership, to ALAC members, to At-Large leadership and every I've worked with for the past four years. I'll be moving on to another role within the region, become an ALAC member, and I look forward to continuing to work with all of you in my new role. Thank you so much for the support.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thanks a lot, Sarah. And then of course, last but not least, Tijani Ben Jemaa. Tijani has been a huge contributor to AFRALO, and as you've said earlier, Tijani is actually recognized as one of the fathers of AFRALO. When I joined the ICANN community some years back, he was one of the people that actually supported me immensely. I can remember the IANA transition days when we had a lot of energy in that during that period, and various discussions that are happening. And of course, some of them, I would disagree with Tijani, some of them, Tijani will say, "Seun, this is what is happening." And then we'll try to see how we can also positively contribute to the discussion, and of course, representing the interests of the region.

So it's very good and refreshing and an honor for me to actually now use this opportunity to thank him immensely for his significant contribution, not just to AFRALO but the entire ICANN community as Maureen, León and the rest of the speakers have said. And on this note, I'd like to see if—before I give Tijani the floor to speak, I see there are some hands up. Abdelmonem, one minute, please.

ABDELMONEM GALILA: Thank you, Seun. I think Mohamed El Bashir [inaudible] to Calvin. I think also, Calvin, if you have any issues with regards to universal acceptance, kindly go to uasg.tech and submit a ticket, and we will help you regarding this issue. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Thank you. Abdulkarim, you have the floor.

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE: Thank you very much, Seun. I just wanted to use this opportunity to thank Tijani and also to congratulate him on the wonderful work he has been doing, and I would say I've worked closely with Tijani especially in the last year, being together with him on the ALAC, and I want to say he's a fantastic person and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors and I would like to say thank you to him. And on behalf of the other ALAC members and on behalf of the community, I'd like to say thank you to Tijani. Thank you.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Okay. Thanks a lot, Abdulkarim. And of course, now I give the floor to Tijani to make a brief remark. Tijani, you have the floor.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much, Seun, and thank you all for these nice words. AFRALO is our community. When I joined ICANN, I found that AFRALO didn't have an opinion. Nobody knows about the position of the African community, at least the African community in At-Large. And I asked why, and the answer was people don't understand what is happening, they don't understand the mails they receive, and there is also a language problem.

So the first thing I tried to do was to organize capacity building for the ALS representatives, and the first ever done in ICANN, capacity building program was done in Dakar 2010, I think. This was the beginning. And also, there was very hard topics at ICANN. At that time, it was the new gTLD program and the application fees which were very high for developing countries. And I tried to convene the whole African ICANN community to discuss this issue and to give an opinion that we can give to the board and to the working group. And this was done, for the first time I think, in Nairobi.

And then since this meeting, we continued to organize the AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting which is an African space to discuss hot topics of ICANN and give the opinion of the African community to the board, to the concerned parties.

For the record, AFRALO is the only region, Africa is the only region who is giving opinion about policy issues to the board and to the concerned parties. We are the only region. Now, the Middle East region is starting to do so, but before until two years ago, we were the only community, the only region to do so. And I think this is a very important thing for our community, for Africa, because policy issues are more or less the aim of our work in ICANN, and if we don't work about that, if we don't give our opinion about that, if people don't understand those policy issues, they are not participating, they are not contributing.

So I would like to thank you again for your nice words, and I will be with you. I will continue to be with you. Anytime you want me, anytime you ask me, I will be there. Don't worry. Thank you very much.

SEUN OJEDEJI: Fantastic. Applause to all our leaders, to Tijani, to Sarah, to Hadia, and of course, [inaudible]. Thanks, Tijani, also for your renewed commitment of your continued participation within AFRALO. Your statements have actually encouraged some of us as well, and of course, we would continue to have a renewed energy towards volunteering within ICANN community.

I'd like to just use this moment to then thank all those who have participated in this call, and of course, before we go, I'd like to also thank staff, the translators who have actually stayed, and finally, I'd like to welcome Abdeldjalil who would be actually becoming the secretary at the end of the AGM, and of course, we look forward to his

continued participation. Congratulations once again to Abdeldjalil and we look forward to—I personally look forward to working with him. And of course, I'm sure my vice chair, Aziz, also looks forward to working with him.

Thank you very much to all those who attended this call. Thank you very much for your contribution. Thank you very much to staff for following us through on this call. Thank you very much to all our interpreters and to those we normally forget, the tech teams. Thanks a lot. When it works, we don't get to remember you. So thanks very much for making this remote experience a good one.

For me, for now, it is bye bye, and I will join the next session. Bye for now.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]