21 February 2023

RE: Universal Acceptance as a means of accessing the Internet in local languages

Seun Ojedeji,
Chair, African Regional At-Large Organisation (AFRALO)

Dear Seun,

ICANN organization (ICANN org) thanks AFRALO-AFRICANN for the joint statement on *Universal Acceptance as a means of accessing the Internet in local languages* (the UA Statement), which came out of discussions held during the ICANN75 Public Meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 21 September 2022. The UA Statement has been posted at https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/correspondence/ojedeji-to-icann-board-29nov22-en.pdf.

We thank AFRALO-AFRICANN for acknowledging the work being done by ICANN org and the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) to promote Universal Acceptance (UA). We completely agree on the importance of a diverse multilingual Internet and agree that UA is a necessary component in making the Internet inclusive for people from different cultures and who speak different languages. Both supply and demand of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) need to be enhanced for better adoption, as noted.

ICANN org appreciates the recommendations which have been put forward to address UA challenges. As we consider your recommendations, please find below a summary of related ongoing work.

Governments can play a significant role in promoting UA. For this purpose, the UASG has identified policymakers as a key stakeholder in its action plan and has been engaging with the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) at ICANN. ICANN org also continues to raise UA issues with policymakers and encourages them to include UA in their procurement policies. UA Local Initiatives also engage with their local governments to promote UA adoption. These interactions are contributing to an increased focus on UA adoption from some governments. The UASG and ICANN org plan to continue with this engagement.

Online content and services in local languages is a good driver for UA adoption, however, this goes beyond the direct purview of ICANN org. ICANN org aims to continue to enable and promote the use of IDNs towards this purpose.

Including IDNs and UA in the curriculum for academic programs can contribute to UA adoption in a sustained way. The UASG and ICANN org are now also working toward developing detailed curricular recommendations and materials for technical degree programs. A call for proposals is currently open for this purpose. Once the materials are developed, ICANN org plans to actively engage with universities for its adoption. In addition, ICANN org continues to conduct regional

training programs with a variety of key stakeholders. We welcome any additional suggestions on the groups we should conduct outreach to for training on UA.

UA Local Initiatives, which aim to address and promote UA in specific regions, are making significant contributions. ICANN org is currently supporting the existing five UA Local Initiatives and is working on increasing the number of them based on recommendations from the UASG. Recently, a new UA Local Initiative was launched in Sri Lanka.

ICANN org is also supporting a global UA Day that will be held on 28 March 2023. The UASG conducted a call for event proposals and we were encouraged to see that several proposals were submitted from the Africa region. We hope the AFRALO-AFRICANN community will consider promoting and participating in these UA Day events to help raise awareness of UA throughout the region. UA Day event details will be made available at https://UniversalAcceptance.day by the end of February 2023.

We appreciate continued input from AFRALO-AFRICANN and look forward to working with you to address UA challenges.

Sincerely,

Theresa Swinehart
Senior Vice President of Global Domains and Strategy