Opening Remarks
by
ROD BECKSTROM
President and Chief Executive Officer
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
New Generic Top-Level Domains
Moscow, Russia
12 December 2011

As prepared; please check against delivery

Thank you very much for your warm welcome. What a pleasure to be back in Russia!

I would like to thank our local host, the Coordination Center for .ru/.rf domains, and personally its CEO, our good colleague, Andrei Kolesnikov. I also want to thank the Ministry of Telecom and Mass communications, and last, but not least, the global Russian Internet Community for the great hospitality, and the organization of this meeting.

It is said that all roads lead to Moscow, and my road has happily led me here today - to join you at the end of a lengthy worldwide tour to raise awareness of a fundamental change that is coming to the Internet.

I have come here immediately after visiting China, and Russia is the last of 18 countries that I have visited since September.

Moscow is a very fitting place to conclude this trip. Russia's active participation in ICANN is of great importance for the development of the global Internet, and its support of the multistakeholder model, through its membership in ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee, and in the different supporting organizations, namely the ccNSO and the gNSO, has played a key role in ensuring that Russian voices are heard in the development of global Internet policy.

Through this constructive engagement, Russia will continue to play a significant role in ICANN and thus in developing solutions to the many and complex problems that confront the Internet today.

We note that while Russia participates actively at all levels in ICANN, it is also active in other international organizations, including the ITU. In the spirit of the recent Plenipotentiary in Guadalajara, Mexico, I have personally engaged in further developing good relations with ITU Secretary-General

Hamadoun Toure to enable greater cooperation between our organizations.

Internationalized Domain Names

This is my second visit to Russia. Some of you may recall that the first was in May of last year, when I had the honor of addressing the Russian Internet Governance Forum. That gave me the opportunity to publicly recognize a major milestone in Internet history as Russia became the first country to be approved for an internationalized domain name, or IDN, in Cyrillic.

Two years ago, ICANN coordinated the Internet community's work to open the top-level domain space to IDNs, and Russia has been a key player in this effort. Its experience in launching its Cyrillic country code top-level domain is crucial to the success of the new generic top-level domain program. This was a major achievement and is indicative of Russia's increasingly important role in the global Internet.

ICANN's core philosophy is based on the concept of inclusion, and it brings together a wide range of stakeholders

around the world who contribute diverse skills, views and expertise to the future of the Internet.

Through this multistakeholder model, policy on the domain name system is developed inclusively, globally, transparently and carefully.

The starting premise is that anyone who is interested has a right to be heard in crafting the Internet's future, and everyone is welcome to contribute, no matter what their view. The multistakeholder approach is open, inclusive, balanced, and effective. This approach is what we don't see at other organizations, but is one of the core values of ICANN.

Russia's role in this complex environment is much appreciated by ICANN and by its many stakeholders.

As Russia's involvement so clearly demonstrates, ICANN is also international, with actively engaged volunteers from around the world. It is one of the key global Internet coordination bodies. The Internet Engineering Task Force develops technical standards for the domain name system. Regional Internet Registries allocate Internet addresses.

Internet Service Providers, registrars, governments, civil society and individual users all contribute.

No one is in charge yet it looks like one cohesive effort. Why? What holds it together when it is really millions of individual networks?

What holds the system together is the Internet's system of unique identifiers: domain names, IP addresses, and protocol parameters. ICANN is the global coordination body for these unique identifiers, and the global community of experts and volunteers collaborates to set policy for the domain name system.

New Generic Top-Level Domains

One of the biggest developments in the Internet's history will begin in January when ICANN starts accepting applications for new generic top-level domains. The program was carefully crafted by the global Internet community to help ICANN fulfill its mission to increase consumer choice, competition and innovation.

ICANN's role is to ensure that the program is fairly, objectively and successfully implemented - to educate, not to advocate. We are a non-profit organization that works in the public interest, and our goal is to help organizations decide whether they wish to participate.

So what is this new program? What do you need to know about it? Should you consider it?

A top-level domain is the right-most label in a domain name, for instance, the "RU" in "dot RU". Currently there are 21 generic top-level domains and 250 country code top-level domains. Add in the 30 IDN country code domains and that brings the total number of top-level domains to about 300.

Now Internet address names will be able to end with almost any word in any language.

This is the third time that ICANN has accepted applications for new top-level domain names; the first two were in 2000 and 2004. Eight names were added as a result of the last round. Some of those applications were under extended consideration because a number of issues had to be addressed – the use of geographic names, community

definitions, and names that raised government and other sensitivities.

The lessons of those initial processes have informed the development of the new gTLD program, and they guide the implementation of a fair and predictable evaluation process.

The current application period will be more open – to allow innovation and local community participation, and to allow new choices to flower. Carefully crafted rules and guidance have been developed for the new gTLD program because it is important to ensure the security and stability of the Internet, to protect legal rights and to safeguard the interests of cultural communities.

Opportunities and risks

A new gTLD is an opportunity to present your organization online in a new and innovative way. It could be a marketing opportunity or a way to gather together a community of people with common interests – culture, sports, science or geographic location, for instance.

ICANN will accept applications beginning on 12 January. If you decide to apply, you must register for an application by 29 March and complete it by 12 April.

If you do apply, you will have to meet very strict technical and financial requirements, as outlined in the *Applicant Guidebook*. This is because a new gTLD is more than a business: it means running a part of the Internet, and it is important that anyone who undertakes this has the knowledge and expertise to operate a registry without endangering the Internet's security and stability.

This is an opportunity that should be carefully considered. Applying for a gTLD is an ambitious endeavor, requiring a significant, long-term commitment. Even applying is a substantial undertaking: it involves a fifty-question application covering a number of areas, including your business plan and proposed registry services. The materials required include detailed, technical, financial and security planning.

The long-term effort requires substantial investment. It costs US $185,000 to apply [*5.8 million rubles; source: Oanda 09-*

12-11] and there are ongoing operational costs involved in operating a critical piece of Internet infrastructure.

Applying for a new gTLD means running an Internet registry – and you must either do it yourself or be responsible for a third party that is helping you. You must demonstrate the ability to remain in business in an ongoing manner. Audited or official financial documents are required and background checks will be conducted.

And as with any new business venture, there are no guarantees. Some new businesses could fail, even if with proper planning.

If you decide to apply, what should you do?

Time is short. We will start accepting applications one month from today. If you have not done so, now is the time to get expert advice and get your marketing people engaged. If you need help there are many companies around the world that offer this service.

If you do not choose to apply, you should still pay attention to those who do, to take advantage of new opportunities and use the protections built into the program to safeguard your brand or community. The application materials will be posted to allow public comment and an opportunity to file formal objections to any application. For example, if you believe your rights are being infringed or there is misappropriation of a community label, you will be able to object.

Need more information?

You can find more information online at www.icann.org. There is a link to a microsite devoted to new gTLDs and this is the definitive source of neutral and objective information about the program. Much of it is available in all six UN languages, including Russian.

Conclusion

The power of the Internet to change our lives is breathtaking. It is profoundly reshaping our communications, our infrastructure, our economies and our future. Its transformative technology spurs innovation, facilitates trade and commerce, and enables the flow of information in the public interest.

We are about to open a door that will lead to even greater innovation and choice, laying the path to the Internet of tomorrow – the greatest potential unifying force of modern times.

Thank you very much for your attention, and for welcoming me back to Russia.

###