Opening Statement by
ROD BECKSTROM
President and Chief Executive Officer
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
Launch of UAE'S Internationalized Domain Name
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As prepared for delivery

Thank you for inviting me to join you on this historic day.

Thanks especially to Mr. Mohamed Nasser Al-Ghanim, Director General of the Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA), for his dedication to bringing this achievement to fruition.

The United Arab Emirates is one of the first four countries in the history of the Internet to secure an internationalized top level domain name, allowing people whose primary language script is Arabic to access websites entirely with Arabic characters.

This achievement is a reflection of UAE's forward thinking and visionary leadership. The Internet is the way of the future, and the UAE has recognized and embraced that future in pursuing this IDN on behalf of its people.

ICANN works toward a common good – a stable and secure global Internet. It keeps the Internet running by maintaining the security and stability of the domain name system to keep the Internet unified. And it is a multi-stakeholder, multinational institution overseen "by the world, for the world", reflecting its increasingly global work.

A truly global Internet means that anyone can connect to anyone anywhere. Our economies, our communications, our social and cultural lives are linked by the Internet – the most powerful communications tool in the history of mankind. And for many millions, the introduction of IDNs means they can do so in their primary language.

Five of the top ten languages in use on the Internet today rely on a non-Latin script: Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Russian and Korean, in roughly descending order. That represents 647 million users. And another 310 million fall into the broad category of "other" languages – not in the top ten – and many of them will also rely on non-Latin scripts.

Arabic is the seventh most common language on the Internet, with an estimated 60 million Arabic language users online. In the last decade Arabic speakers came online faster than other language group – by an astonishing 2300 percent.

UAE is a leader in Internet usage. A study by INSEAD and the World Economic Forum recently ranked it the most networked country in the region. 74.1 percent of its 4.8 million population was online as of December 2009 - 3.5 million people. It has 557,600

broadband connections and some 11 million mobile phones – two for each person. It is a way of life in the UAE.

The ccTLD manager of UAE, .ae Domain Administration (aeDA), is by far the largest registry in the Arab world (90,000 domain names registered). That is reflected in its commitment to win approval for an IDN. UAE, with the leadership of its TRA, was the first country in the region to introduce the registry/registrar model, allowing for competition and consumer choice in the domain names market (there are 15 registrars for .ae).

UAE has been a member of ICANN's Government Advisory Committee (GAC) for many years, and aeDA is also a member of the country code Name Supporting Organization (ccNSO).

Dot emarat will bring multiple benefits. It will help to foster innovation and creativity, and provide better branding opportunities for local companies. It will increase convenience and consumer choice, and generate educational opportunities. It will open up access to the Internet to more Arabic speakers, who until now have been blocked by the need to use Latin script.

But it will also help stimulate the pride that comes with expressing a nation's cultural identity. Dot emarat will say to the world: *we are Arab; we are Emarati*.

We cannot know the long-term impact of this change but one thing is sure: the next wave of Emarati users – those who aren't online yet – will now have a greater chance to benefit from the Internet's opportunities because of the leadership shown by the TRA and its Director General.

As we speak today, people who have never used the Internet are joining this world movement. The world is a network of villages; they have their own languages. But we are all becoming connected through this amazing global system. Millions of people – the next Internet users in the UAE and beyond – will now be able to use Arabic script to do so.

We are honored to be with you today in recognition of this significant achievement. Congratulations.

Thank you.