ICANN75 | AGM – Middle East Space - UA Roadmap for Registry and Registrar Systems
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TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Hello, everyone. This is the Middle East Space at ICANN75. Our topic today will be the Universal Acceptance Roadmap for Registry and Registrar Systems. We are happy to have you all here. Thank you very much.

And we thank our invitees. First, our chair of the Board, Mr. Maarten Botterman. And Ihab, who is also a director at the ICANN Board, a head boss man. Thank you to Baher who is here also, and who has always supported us. Baher Esmat, who is the Vice President and the manager of the Istanbul hub.

We will start first by introducing this meeting by Mr. Baher Esmat. Baher, if you are here, please take the floor.

BAHER ESMAT: Thank you, Tijani. Can you hear me?

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Yes. And before I give you the floor, I would like to welcome our President and CEO, Göran Marby. Go ahead there, Baher.

BAHER ESMAT:	All right, thank you. And good afternoon, everyone. I'm pleased to join the Middle East session. This time I'm joining remotely from Istanbul, and I'd like to start off the Middle East Space participants for the excellent work they have been doing over the years. It's been almost five years since the inception of this initiative, the Middle East Space. I remember we were at ICANN60 in Abu Dhabi when this started off. And ever since then, you have been making substantial contributions to several important ICANN issues and processes.

The subject of your discussion today is related to Universal Acceptance, as Tijani noted. This, as you all know, is an extremely important topic not only for ICANN, but also for the Middle East region. Universal Acceptance is one of ICANN's priorities in the Middle East [inaudible] engaging with various stakeholders [inaudible] to raise awareness, develop capacities, and encourage adoption of Universal Acceptance and internationalize the e-mails with particular focus on the Arabic script-based domains.

This is also not the first time that the Middle East Space has discussed this topic. As far as I remember, it's been discussed a couple of times in the past, yet each time you've addressed different aspects of the topic. And this time today, your discussion will focus on the registry and registrar systems.

So I look forward to your discussion today, and I'd like once again to commend the work carried out by this group. And thanks for inviting me again to join your session. And with that, I'm going to turn it back to Tijani. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much, Baher. Now I'd like to, again, welcome Göran Marby, since he just came. So our meeting today is about Universal Acceptance for registry and registrar systems. I will give you the floor, Göran, to give your speech.

GÖRAN MARBY: Thank you very much. And thank you very much for inviting me. [Just give me a second]. So first of all, thank you very much for inviting me. And I have a feeling I've seen some of you earlier this week. And so unfortunately, if you meet me more than once during an ICANN meeting, you tend to hear the same thing. So, sorry about that.

Universal Acceptance is one of the reasons I work for ICANN. And you know that because I've been saying it for six years. We are in this pivotal time, in a way, where we have this opportunity with the continuation of the round to see what we can do better to make sure that we can encompass people's needs around the world. I said earlier today that I think that if we would only add

English names to the root server ... And again, that would be a failure. But that's my personal opinion more than anything else.

But I do believe that because we have this golden opportunity, I believe, to take the next step to really make sure that people around the world can identify [themselves] on the Internet using their own language, their own script, their own keyboard. But maybe more than important, their own narrative.

And I get so many questions this week, and people ask me, "How are you going to do the next billion users?" And it's true that the next billion users don't read ... I mean, it's only 20% of the world population that speak English. And sometimes we talk about the Internet is very focused on or centralized around how we do things in the Western world. And it's true. The technology itself is completely neutral, but the way we've done some of those things has not been good enough.

And together with you as a community and together with all of the experts you have, we have a chance to do that. And one of the reasons I think this is important—and I say this again and again and again—is because I think that if we don't do this and take this seriously, we might lose languages over the next three generations.

And with kids today, they are very used to going online and they're used to English and reading from left to right. And they use

the Latin script. And I believe that language is one of the most important and good differences around the world because it's about your history. It's about your narrative. It's about where you come from. And we should be able to encompass that going forward. And now we have that opportunity in the next round.

And we continue to support the Universal Acceptance work through financing, head count. We added more resources in the team as well. And also, we're going to continue to do that during next year. There is an action plan, and I must read the numbers because, sorry, I don't have it in my head. The FY23 Universal Acceptance has an allocated budget of $700,000 for the different projects and activities identified.

So we're showing the commitment. We're putting the resources in, but still have a lot of work to do. I want to thank the Telecom Regulatory Authority of the Kingdom of Bahrain who, as you know, is helping us to arrange the Universal Acceptance hackathon during the end of 2022. And I think that's a really good idea. They hope that many local resources will be invited to that forum.

They also asked me to market some of the other events that are happening [inaudible] next time. These were the things I needed to say. So let's go back to the importance of what we do.

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One of the things we need to do, really—which I think is important, especially in your area—is to convince governments to do this. And when I work with the Universal Acceptance Group, I'm trying to figure out a way to tell governments that every time they buy something—equipment from a vendor—it should be in there. It's actually supporting of Universal Acceptance.

By doing that, they help to create what we need—the demand for more development and more software that actually is compliant with Universal Acceptance. Governments around the world are the biggest buyers of IT equipment, software, and everything else. They are, by their size.

If we can get them for their own country to start putting in their contracts that it has to be accepted, there has to be a provision for Universal Acceptance, that would make a big difference because the big problem today is that the manufacturers don't see the demand. And if they don't see the demand, they don't stop developing. So we have a little bit of a catch-22 on our hands. So I'm going to spend a lot of …

Every time I meet a government today, that's one of the things I'm talking about. But I'll leave it at that. And thank you very much for inviting me. Question?

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you, Göran. Is there any question for Göran? Okay.

GÖRAN MARBY: Am I so boring today? Oh, there's one.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: You are so clear, Göran. Thank you very much.

GÖRAN MARBY: There's one on the side here.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Okay.

SAMI ALI: Hi. This is Sami Ali from TRA Bahrain, for the record. I have a question. Is ICANN having the ability to enforce the UA on LinkedIn, Facebook, and that kind of social media? Can that be pushed through?

GÖRAN MARBY: No, we can't. But sometimes I wish I could. So these are commercial … Remember that we represent the diverse Internet, and without any … I don't want to be anything condescending, but they represent what we call a walled garden. They are not on the Internet. You use the Internet to get into them. When you walk into a platform, you leave the Internet and walk literally into

someone else's computer. Totally controlled by that environment.

And because many of them come out of ... Not all of them because some of the big media platforms come out of other countries which are English speaking. It's still very interesting that in most of them, you use Latin script to identify yourself.

I believe in the multistakeholder model. I also believe in the power of the consumer. I think what we need to do is continue this road to say that we create this demand for consumers and governments [inaudible] to sort of ... So they see the business opportunity for it.

But to answer your question, no, we can't. We can't do that. We never have anything to do with content, so to say. And they are what we called ... It sounds very, very strange to say they're on another level. We just provide the Internet. What you do with it is sort of up to you. Thank you for your question.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much. And thank you, Göran, for coming and for supporting us as [inaudible].

Our second speaker—okay, thank you—is the Chair of the ICANN Board, Mr. Maarten Botterman, who is always supporting us, who never missed any of our meetings when we invite him. So it is a

big support that I want to notice here. And thank you very much, Maarten. The floor is yours.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Thank you, Tijani. Normally I speak before Göran, and then he complains that I've said it all. This time I'll say—

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Let me clarify. You were on the agenda first, but your staff told me that you have a commitment and you will come late. That's why we changed. Thank you.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: I wasn't complaining about you. I was just complaining about recognizing that Göran was right because he said most of what I would say.

It's so good to see you here. This is the first time that I actually see you online. I've seen a lot of you on Zoom, but now in the room. And that's a true pleasure.

Thank you also for all of the work you do. It's so good, within your region, to have a specific focus on what's needed for you and how the ICANN work affects you and how you can affect ICANN work together by coming with clear statements and positions on that.

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So, you know promoting Universal Acceptance and IDN implementation is a goal, also, in our Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan has been driving us, and they'll continue to drive us towards the future because it helps us to look a little bit beyond what's just in front of us ahead.

And I'll ask your attention for also development of the new Strategic Plan which will start at some point—first quarter, second quarter next year. That may be you if you're interested, too. Because serving the world and serving the next billion is certainly a part of that.

So the Board has set up a dedicated Board working group that meets a couple of times per year. And it's now been in existence for a year. That's to ensure that the awareness is hot on the table around as well. This is a topic that will require more time before we get to the level where it fully serves the world. Also because it's not only the DNS space, but it's also the browsers, the e-mail, etc.

So I think that what you've been presenting in the statement that this here is truly an understanding of where we are and what needs to happen next. And it starts with consciously choosing for Universal Acceptance, compliance, ways forward. So I think with that you set an example in the Middle East and across the world in pushing the digital transformation agenda and making sure

that this is not only an Anglo script agenda, but truly an agenda that also serves the region itself very much.

So registries and registrars are key stakeholders in this industry, and I see that they're explicitly addressed, too. I really appreciate that. Right now, I would say that if you look to the world in the eyes, a clear example of where multiple stakeholders and multiple scripts, also with their government are very much engaged in doing it. If I look around, then I think the Middle East is the second one where I see such a commitment and willingness to move forward as this.

So I encourage you all to consider making your systems UA ready, and I appreciate your call to the wider community very much. And, yes, you can benefit, I hope and I believe, from the work of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group. And I know that the chairman of that group will talk, too, after me as well.

So congratulations. I don't have to run out immediately. I'll stick around for a couple of minutes. Any questions? I'm happy to answer.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much, Maarten. Thank you for your continuous support. If you have any question to Maarten, please. Yes, please.

KHALED FATTAL: Thank you Tijani, for the [inaudible] to Maarten for your—

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Introduce yourself, please. Introduce yourself.

KHALED FATTAL: Yes, thank you. For most of you who don't know me, my name is Khaled Fattal. I'm the chairman of the MLi Group. And this is probably my 68th, 69th ICANN meeting, so I probably have seniority on most of you. But this is not what I'm speaking.

I want to put things in perspective when it comes to Universal Acceptance. And I was not planning on attending this this session today. I think, first, let me pay tribute to tremendous effort of community members and communities who have actually been working very hard and diligently to make progress. But I think we really need to put it in the right perspective. And I wish Göran was still here because he needs to hear it.

We discovered as a community here at ICANN why there is need for Universal Acceptance when we launched the last day of the round when many of the IDN TLDs were not resolving. So if this was a product that Tesla was selling and I went and bought a car from them and then discovered that one of the wheels doesn't work. And then Tesla says to me, "Keep the car. We'll see what we

can do while you keep it and we'll help you work with it to fix it." In the meanwhile, I'm running on three wheels. You know that would not be a good situation.

So it's important for me, as you've always known me in this community here, to put things on the record just to make sure that we know where mistakes were made, where accountabilities are. And many years later, we're saying we need to make the governments require this as part of the contracts. We failed. We as a community failed. We launched a TLD round that pertains to IDNs, and we did not take all of the right boxes to make sure they resolve.

So take that into consideration. Let's see how we can fix this because years on, this is still not fixed and this is totally unacceptable. This is not championing the communities of the world to make them part of this global Internet and making the next billion on the web or championing IDNs.

Last point for many of you who don't know. In 2004 ICANN hosted the ICANN meeting in KL and we had a full one day. It was jointly chaired by myself and Vint Cerf on IDNs and Multilingual Internet. And back then I don't know if Maarten you were there at the time. Back then, I made a presentation about why we cannot afford to make IDNs as a domain name only. I used the analogy that if domains is what ICANN provide, which is a fruit—we're trying to

sell them a banana of IDNs—IDNs require an ecosystem that support it. Sadly, this is what we ended up having. We offered IDNs with only a domain, but there is not enough sufficient ecosystem to support it. That's why we are where we are today.

So I'm putting this on the record so at least we look back and see where we went wrong so we can fix this and we can accelerate Universal Acceptance to a point where it becomes acceptable. Because so far, years on, this is unacceptable. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much. Maarten.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Thank you, Tijani. It almost sounds like you say, "Let's stop. Let's walk away from it." And that is not, obviously, your intent nor what is needed here. So I would just want to point out that like—

KHALID FATTAL: I did say let's accelerate. I didn't say let's stop.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Okay. So as I wasn't there between 2004 and 2008, what did you guys do? But basically, you're right. It's an ecosystem thing. And this is also why I think the solution … And you will hear more from the Universal Acceptance stakeholder group. They're actively

trying to pull in, also, the browser operators, the e-mail operators. Because it's not just a DNS thing. It's more than that. DNS is an enabler. It's not the final solution.

It's like providing electricity along the roads. There's a necessity for electric cars to be able to drive. Otherwise, they just won't have the energy. So it is important to progress this. It is key and I, again, applaud the call for going for UA readiness, for which we get a clearer view of what that takes now.

As with IP version 6, in which I was quite involved in the early 2000s, we saw that the readiness for IP version 6 went up and up and up from 20% to 80% in five years or something. And at some point, the counter started. It stayed at 2% users of IP version 6. 2%—well, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9. And suddenly it went up. But fortunately, the industry was prepared for that because they've been working on being ready for it already earlier.

So this means that the call, as you point them out, is still a very valid one in my eyes. And as you've heard around here and from Göran, this is clearly a priority that we all embrace, believe in, and are working hard to make work as well as possible.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you, Maarten. Any other question for Maarten? Yes. Please, Christine.

CHRISTINE ARIDA: Christine Arida with the Egyptian government, for the record. It's just a comment, not another question. Since Maarten mentioned the Strategic Plan and a new one coming into effect soon. They're starting to be prepared and then come into effect. And also, Göran talked about demand for Universal Acceptance.

I think it is important to continue to focus on not only growing the DNS market, but growing its diversity and its geographic reach. We'll still have a lot of concentration in the market. And it I think it will be only important if we grow it in a geographical manner, that we have demand for Universal Acceptance.

So I really hope that this is something that will continue to be on ICANN's Strategic Plan with all of the different things that are coming—the new rounds and everything—that we focus on how to really expand that into underserved. We expand the DNS market into underserved regions. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you for the remark. You want to say something?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: It's top of the agenda. And that is not something I usually say. Okay? Thank you.

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TIJANI BEN JEMAA:	So if there is not another question for Maarten. You know Maarten never makes a speech and goes. He's always with us, and he discusses the substance of our work. So this is the real support. Thank you very much.
	So now that Maarten is finished, I would like to give the floor to our Board Director from our region, the head boss man, to make some comments and to give a speech. Please, Ihab.
IHAB OSMAN:	Thank you Tijani. And thank you for inviting me to the Middle East Space. It's always a pleasure to be here and, finally, we get to do it in person after two and a half years of COVID. Being a native Arabic speaker, Universal Acceptance is something very personal and of importance to me.
	Also, I would like to just link it to real life and why we absolutely need your very strong push with the rest of the community to push the adoption and implementation of Universal Acceptance. In my day job, I actually run an investment vehicle that invests in schools in the Middle East region, and specifically in Saudi Arabia.
	And I was reading a report few months ago done by the education section in the World Bank, a study they did on the Arabic language. And basically, the conclusion of the report is that the

written Arabic language is disappearing. Today, children unfortunately are only learning colloquial Arabic, and the level of proficiency of the Arabic language is truly dismal.

So to preserve this very rich language and our heritage, we need every tool that we can. We all know the main source of information for all of us, and especially children, is becoming the online resources and technology. So we desperately need a wider adoption of Universal Acceptance, and specifically the Arabic language to help in increasing the number of resources that are available in Arabic online to help in preserving this language that needs the support from all of us to continue its relevance in the world today.

So I applaud the work you're doing with the Middle East Space, Tijani. I applaud your efforts with this for many, many years, and your strong drive and push, an all of the team of the Middle East Space and the community. And Baher in Istanbul. I think we can take all of the work we could to make this reality.

And thank you, again, for your invitation. And you always can count on my support in pushing the adoption of Universal Acceptance wherever we could. Thank you, Tijani. And thank you all.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much, Ihab. In fact, it's a teamwork. Fahd is making a lot of effort to make this work done. And inside the leadership of the Middle East Space, we are three persons. And I can tell you that one year or so, it is mainly Abdalmonem wo is working everything. So I would like, really, to thank him. And I can tell you that he will be the leader of this group very soon. Thank you very much, Ihab. And thank you …

Do you want to go? Okay. So he has a commitment this time. He will not stay with us. Thank you very much [inaudible].

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: That's only [a function of] with Zoom meetings. You can do it more spread across time. So thank you very much. And, yes, I'm impressed. Thank you for all of your work, Tijani, as well.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much, Maarten Thank you. So now we invite Ajay, who is one of the co-chairs of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group. I don't see him here yet, so I will give the floor to Abdalmonem, who will introduce the topic. Abdalmonem, please.

ABDALMONEM GALILA: Thank you, Mr. Tijani. Actually, Dr. Ajay is involved with another meeting for IDNs. That's why he will join us soon after a while. So I will take this chance to introduce the topic. Actually, this is not

the first topic for the Middle East to talk about Universal Acceptance.

[We'll] have the first related to Universal Acceptance and Internationalized Domain Names. The second one, Universal Acceptance and E-mail Address Internationalization. And this one, we selected maybe a different topic. We are going for the origins for these domain names and e-mail addresses. That's why we are considering [inaudible] registry and registrar systems.

For the Middle East to have different models of domain name registrations, we'll have [three models or have two models]. The system consists of many components. For example, if you want to register a domain name as a registrar or as a reseller, there is a module to validate these e-mail addresses or these domain names that you are trying to reserve with this registrar.

Also, there is a communication between the registrar and the registry through the protocol called the EPP, Extensible Provisioning Protocol. This also should be considered for Universal Acceptance and the registry itself that stores these domain names and e-mail addresses should be compliant with Universal Acceptance, should be able to accept, validate, store, process, and display these domain names and e-mail addresses correctly.

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At same time, as an end user I expect that registry [inaudible] send e-mail notifications about if your registration is successfully done, you need to renew your domain, name your domain name is expired, your domain name is in the grace period. Even for the online payment gateway. I would like to receive such notification of the payment at my e-mail address. I need to receive the invoice at my e-mail address. Me as a contact—administrative, technical, or financial—whatever it is.

Actually, the idea behind selecting this topic among other topics [inaudible] of ICANN now and discussing now that when you go back again a little bit, [inaudible] pandemic, you will find something maybe that needs your attention. If you would like to buy a small tomato, you have to go to online shops. You don't go to stores. You have to go to online shops.

So me, for example, I wanted to ... I don't know English. I couldn't write English. I wanted to use my Arabic language to access this Arabic content of site. So I need to use this domain name. At same time, this domain name should be what I wrote, what I see. It's Arabic. I should see it as Arabic. I wanted to receive notifications that I placed an order at my e-mail, receive invoice at my Arabic e-mail address.

At the same time, the seller who owns this shop, most of the time for the Middle East, relies on something called content

management system. So how many content management system [inaudible] will this rely? More than 400 million websites.

To have an example from this application called WordPress, you know that WordPress consumes 1.1 million domain names every six months. It registers new domain names. If I am a seller and I would like to have something for free, I will go for a content management system and buy a domain name. I should comply with my customer, with my end user. So I select a domain name is the proper language. It's for IDNs. I wanted to communicate with my customers through their e-mail address—Arabic e-mail address, Chinese e-mail address, whatever.

So now the user shows that it is important to exist online. All of the government is going for digital transformation project. So all of the services are already online. So if you want, for example, to have the traffic [inaudible], you have to go online.

So what, in case I don't know how to write English? I wanted to use mobile and to say that [violation].Egypt, for example. It will be directed immediately to the Arabic domain name. I said [violation].Egypt, but in Arabic to go to this Arabic content of site and register or sign in using my Arabic e-mail address and receive what is the certificate for the [violation]. That is a trend for the government to digitize every service that are going for online

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users. So online users should exist and use their own identity. These are the rights.

So that is why we're selecting this topic. So I will leave the floor now to our colleagues, Zakir and Nabil Benamar to read the document. But before doing that, I will leave the floor for Mr. Tijani.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you, Abdalmonem. As you know, the process is the following. All of our work is community driven. So we make a call for a topic among the topics that are the hot topics that are discussed inside ICANN. And among the proposals that we will receive, we choose the most popular, the one that received more votes, if you want.

And then we constitute a drafting team. Among the community, we make a call for volunteers for the drafting team. And the drafting team make a first draft. We put it for comment for the community. And then according to these comments, drafting team draft the second draft that you have now on the table.

So we have now a statement. And why do we write the statement? We write a statement to send it to the ICANN Board first and to all parties that are concerned about that. If there is a working group who is working on this topic, we sent the statement to this

working group so that we may impact the decision. That's why we prepared a statement.

So Zakir, if you are here, I give you the floor to present the statement, please. And Nabil. I don't know if Nabil is here also.

ABDALMONEM GALILA: Yeah. So go to Nabil for the first part of the statement. And Zakir will follow up. Thank you.

NABIL BENAMAR: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Abdalmonem. Thank you, Tijani, for this topic and for leading the session. So this is Nabil Benamar from Morocco. I'm representing the Measurements Working Group chair with the UASG. So we have been working on measurements about IDNs, about Universal Acceptance for a while, and it was really good to introduce this topic in this draft so that we raise awareness about this critical and technical challenge in our region and for our community.

So we came up with a draft statement where we are recommending to ICANN to strengthen the communication and open a dialogue between UASG—which stands for Universal Acceptance Steering Group—and Registries Stakeholder Group and also Registrar Stakeholder Group so that we can further

promote the UA concept for registries and registrars in the region with these groups.

We need also to discuss the challenges for being UA ready and drive a plan for registries to comply with UA readiness. We further promote the UA concept for the registries/registrars with the RrSG. And then we also recommend to discuss the challenges for being UA ready and drive a plan for registrars to comply with UA readiness as well.

Through GAC and ccNSO, help to reach out to their country code TLD managers and its accredited local registries/registrars to deliver the message [inaudible] UA compliance was a mandate for all delegated TLDs. And then to scan all of registries and conduct a survey about their willingness to be UA complaint.

We further recommend that the UASG enhance the focus on the regional registries and the resources on UA; more UA ambassadors in the Middle East region representing different local stakeholders to help. So as you know, this is really important to help spread the word and then engage with local communities through the ambassadorship program. We have already an Ambassador Working Group in the UASG, but we need more help from ICANN so that we can have more ambassadors, especially that our region contains different communities and different languages, different scripts, and different challenges.

So we need to have more ambassadors. We have to raise the UA awareness program for registries and registrars, showing how important is UA and the need for UA and the returns from adopting UA, the benefits from this.

Continue to synthesize these regional communities about UA. Engage the original content service providers in UA. Prepare a list of registries and registrars. Use [APIs] to check its UA readiness and give recommendation [inaudible]. To continue to plan and organize awareness sessions, training, and workshops that can be train-the-trainer workshops also. Ask for technical advice for the promotion of UA together with registries, registrars, software providers, and other stakeholders.

Communicate with the registries and the registrars and software providers to adopt UA compliance for future release and update the old ones to comply. To engage with API providers to adopt UA compliance the future release of their APIs.

We finally recommend that registries and registrars use the UA compliance API for their registry software. Enable e-mail service to be UA compliant or ask e-mail vendors to do so. Ask their registry and registry software providers to adopt UA for next patches or next software releases. And then, finally, raise the awareness flag for their customers about UA.

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So that's the main content of our draft, which is towards raising the awareness toward UA and the use of UA through the registries and the registrars. Thank you.

ABDALMONEM GALILA: Yes. Thank you, Nabil, for this Executive Summary about the statement. So now I will invite our colleague Zakir from remote participation to read the recommendations for all parties for the statement. Thank you.

ZAKIR SYED: Thank you, Abdalmonem. This is Zakir from Pakistan. I'm an ICANN alumni and member of the Middle East Strategy Working Group. I was part of the team that contributed to drafting this Middle East statement.

Since Nabil has already elaborated the three dimensions of this Middle East statement—which is ICANN Org, the Universal Acceptance Steering Group, and, of course, the Registries and Registrars—in the interest of time, I will be reading. But, with apologies to the translators in advance if I'm a bit fast.

So we the Middle East community members participating in the ICANN75 at Kuala Lumpur in consultation with the Middle East community discuss the UA Roadmap for Registry and Registrar Systems and produced the following statement thereupon. As

was presented in the Middle East Space at ICANN Kobe in Japan, the Middle East community continues to believe that UA is of growing importance to our region and, of course, beyond.

UA support's inclusion allows users of the Internet to build their own online identities and improve their online experiences. To continue to advance the Universal Acceptance project, there is a need for a robust Universal Acceptance roadmap for registry and registrars systems in the region. Such a roadmap would not only further augment the UA efforts in the region, but would also contribute to the development of the overall DNS ecosystem in the region.

So this statement is in line with ICANN Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 as well as ICANN Middle East Action Plan for the year 2023. The wider Middle East community recommends in this draft statement that ICANN Org strengthens the communications and open a dialogue between UASG, RySG—which is the Registries Stakeholder Group—and RrSG, the Registrar Stakeholder Group, to further promote the Universal Acceptance concept for registries and registrars in the region; to discuss the challenges for the UA already; to further promote the UA concept for the registrars with RrSG; and to discuss the challenges, of course, for being UA ready and drive a plan for registrars to comply with UA readiness, similarly to—

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you, Zakir. Thank you very much. We are running out of time. We have another invitee, Mr. Ajay Data who is one of the chairs, I think.

ZAKIR SYED: Right, Tijani. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Okay. Who is the chair of the Universal Acceptance the Steering Group. He is very kind to come to us and to speak about this issue. Ajay, you have the floor, please.

AJAY DATA: Thank you, Tijani. I love always to come this Middle East Space. I was [inaudible] in other session. I just took a leave to come here to interact with you. So just for your knowledge, if you may not know, the Universal Acceptance Steering Group trading group already has a document named as Roadmap for Registry and Registrar systems. And that's there on site. You may like to look at it and read it and convert this into ... And we can convert this into the language if it is required by you. That's one small point on the draft statement.

The second point is related to the 16th of February as a date. I would like to leave you with that date. That's the UA Day. That day is coming in 2023 where we are going to celebrate the Universal Acceptance. And it's an opportunity for Middle East Space to hold events and talks and awareness programs and hackathons in your region. And this could be 5, 10, 15 programs in that region to really make an impact in that region. If we are looking for live impact and large awareness in that region, involve every stakeholder and you could be doing this.

The offer which I have is that we are going to create the knowledge base and the presentations for very soon. And also [inaudible] opportunities in that area. So Universal Acceptance Steering Group is keeping those knowledge base ready and trying to move that direction.

And the importance part. I think already know the importance. But just to tell you, we are also talking about in this ICANN, the new gTLD round. And when is the new round is coming in? If we want those domain names to work, we need to solve the UA problem. But at the same time, what domain names have been issued, if they do not work, we are not going to likely have the large top-level domain names in the future.

Hence, this is a very, very important aspect to address the UA issue for all of the old domain names so that they work in the

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system. People use those [inaudible] and IDNs, and they work flawlessly just like an ASCII e-mail system. Hence, the government policy intervention is also very, very important. That all of the systems, all of the forms … If somebody applies for a visa, somebody applies for a driving license, somebody applies for this—can he use the Arabic e-mail letters? That is the policy intervention. If the government procures software, can they procure UA [inaudible].

I think Tijani has already warned me for the time in the beginning. Thank you for the opportunity, Tijani, for giving this opportunity to us to have a little intervention. But I would be very, very happy to come again on virtual sessions or Middle East whenever it is required. We are committed to the cause. Thank you very much. And would seek the leave from you to go back. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Thank you very much, Ajay. Ajay is already supportive. I know that. And we have one of the co-chairs here beside me, Abdalmonem, who is always reporting everything happening in the Steering Group. Thank you very much.

So now we go to the essential of this session. You all have the statement, so we need to discuss it. We have five minutes more in this session, so I ask you please to volunteer and to discuss this

statement. The one who will moderate the discussion is Dima Samaro. Is Dima online? Dima?

ABDALMONEM GALILA: It seems that she is not online. Could I jump in?

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Okay, no problem. So we will give the floor to Zakir to moderate this session.

ABDALMONEM GALILA: Yeah, no problem.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Okay. Zakir, please? The floor is yours.

ZAKIR SYED: Thank you, Tijani. So as the speakers earlier have already elaborated on the topic a lot, and one of the important topics that Ajay just mentioned that the UASG already has a document, a roadmap, for Universal Acceptance. Let me highlight one of the points here. The region/community when drafting this statement, we believed that the region has its own dynamics and that's why the community was convened and got together to be able to draft this statement given that the region has specific dynamics.

And the three important aspects, which is ICANN Org, the UASG, and the Registries and Registrars. You know, covering the overall DNS ecosystem in the region. And as we mentioned earlier, basically this roadmap of the Middle East community for Universal Acceptance actually revolves around the dynamics of the region.

It is in line with ICANN's regional strategy, and that's why we will be focusing more in the regional strategy 2023 in this, as Ajay. There have to be policy interventions. There have to be interactions with the software developers. There have to be interaction with e-mail service providers [inaudible].

So that is something which the community believes would be something that will help us augment the efforts that are already taking place in the region with respect to Universal Acceptance and Universal Acceptance readiness.

So while we are working on this draft statement, we are open to comments from the regional community, from the participants here in this session and all other stakeholders. If there any comments, please do share.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Yes. Go ahead Chokri.

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CHOKRI BEN ROMDHANE: Okay. I would like to thank all of the draft time for the effort they did in order provide this very useful draft. And I think that the idea to promote or to seek collaboration between registries, registrars, and local government to promote Universal Acceptance is very useful.

But I think that Universal Acceptance groups or teams have to provide [inaudible] to this actor. If this community or this team will provide some solution to the registry or the registrar, in goes in [inaudible] that this actor will adopt the solution.

We all know that the Universal Acceptance issues is typically at the software level and whether the software would be adopted to the Universal Acceptance requirement. So what I recommend is that Universal Acceptance provide some solution, or in this draft [inaudible] some solution or some effort than have [inaudible] by the Universal Acceptance community in order to give some solution to the registry and registrar and to the local government and local ccTLD. Thank you.

ABDALMONEM GALILA: Could I take this?

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Yes.

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ABDALMONEM GALILA: Yeah. Actually, the Universal Acceptance Steering Group, as I am there as the vice-chair of the working group who have different tracks to work out for modifying the API [inaudible] application programming interface that developed 20 years ago in order to make it Universal Acceptance ready. That is one track.

The other track, we are going to [inaudible] e-mail server providers in order to adopt the concept of Universal Acceptance, whatever is the criteria. At same time, we are going to [inaudible] the biggest forums like Stack Exchange/Stack Overflow to answer the questions that are related to Universal Acceptance.

Most of these questions that are there are related to e-mail address internationalization. They are talking about Unicode. Are there any e-mail addresses in your code? Yes, there are. But actually, most of these questions are old enough. So the time we are engaged as UASG with this forum will try to answer all of these question and raise some questions and answer it.

So anyone, if you are going to Stack Exchange and ask about EI you will find a topic that, yes, it is done. You could have e-mail address server. You look for other providers. Maybe a provider like Microsoft. If you are going for e-mail exchange I think [inaudible] you'll find it EI ready.

So why are we going for EI readiness? [inaudible] looking towards the future. The future of working with IDNs and EIs. It's a trend.

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We want to have [inaudible] as the first one worldwide to deploy EIs for the mail server. Why is the open-source software like, for example, MUA [inaudible] and other software for SMTP and [inaudible] are working now currently supporting [inaudible]. You could send and receive e-mail. Also, it is open-source software.

We went also for another track for the open-source developers. We're trying to negotiate with them in order to develop for the future releases for [inaudible] software to adopt Universal Acceptance in all stages. Accept, validate, store, process, display.

Thank you. I hope I answered your question.

ZAKIR SYED: Thank you, Abdalmonem. Thank you, Chokri, for that comment. Very useful, of course. Are there any other comments from any other participants, please?

ABDALMONEM GALILA: Yeah. I just want to add a comment that Universal Acceptance is not related to application [inaudible] advisors or system only that are connected online to the Internet, but also for the offline equipment. Maybe you have a multifunction machine that you need to scan some document and will be sent immediately to that e-mail address. So the software should adopt Universal

Acceptance as well. We are going for all of these tracks, and I hope we'll do it well in the proper way. Thank you.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Any other questions for Zakir?

ZAKIR SYED: As Abdalmonem mentioned, it's not about the domain name only. And as, earlier, Mr. Khalid Fattal also mentioned, it actually has to be the entire ecosystem that needs to be looked at. So, yes, definitely, it's not only the domain name that revolves around the Universal Acceptance. But it actually has to be the software developers, the API developers, and even the content producers and other stakeholders who have to work together to be able to make Universal Acceptance a success not only in the region, but the world over.

If there are any further comments, will take those.

TIJANI BEN JEMAA: Okay. Otherwise, thank you very much. I would like to stress my thanks to all of you, to all of our invitees, also to the leadership team, especially Abdalmonem Galila who is doing everything since at least one year. And I intentionally let him do that because we need a handover. And at the end of this year, we will make a call for volunteers to the leadership of this group. And I see

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already a leader, clearly, so that I can step down and let young people lead this group.

Thank you very much, all. And please continue to contribute with us. Continue your interest. It is very important that you propose topics, that you go with the drafting teams, and that you participate with us. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]

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