



### **What is an IDN?**

An IDN or “internationalized domain name” is an Internet domain name that is in non-Latin characters such as those used in the Cyrillic, Arabic or Chinese languages.

### **What is the history of IDNs?**

IDNs have been used since 2001 at the “second level” of an Internet name - the portion to the left of the dot. But once an Internet user got to the final portion of a domain name - the top-level domain (TLD), to the right of the dot, like dot-com, dot-net or dot-org, they had to switch to Latin characters because of technical limitations. Now, after years of work by ICANN, a global system for the use of other scripts in domain names has been designed and tested, and the first ones, including Egypt’s, are coming online.

### **Why are they important?**

Using IDNs for the entire Internet domain is vital in making the Internet addressing system more user-friendly for global users, regardless of where they live or what language they speak.

### **What will be the impact of IDNs?**

IDNs are expected to increase the number of global Internet users – a core mission of ICANN. In Egypt, for example, an estimated 62 million people are currently not online. The use of IDNs should help lower that number.

### **How is ICANN handling the rollout of IDNs?**

In stages. Right now IDNs will only be allowed on a limited basis involving country code top-level domains, which are the designators at the end of an address name, such as dot-eg for Egypt. Eventually, the use of IDNs will be vastly expanded to all types of Internet address names.

### **What other countries will be among the first IDNs on the Internet?**

Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have joined Egypt as the first countries to have their top level domain IDNs approved.

### **How many countries have applied for IDNs?**

So far 21 countries representing 11 different languages have applied for country code top-level domains and that number is constantly growing. A complete list can be found on ICANN’s web site at <http://icann.org/en/topics/idn/fast-track/>.