

21 May 2019

Tijani Ben Jemaa, Middle East Space
Nadira Alaraj, Middle East Space

Re. Middle East Space - Statement on Universal Acceptance

Dear Tijani and Nadira,

ICANN org thanks the Middle East (ME) community members for sharing the Statement on Universal Acceptance (UA), which was discussed by its members on 11 March 2019 at ICANN64 and communicated on 28 March 2019. The statement has been posted at <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/correspondence/jemaa-alaraj-to-elias-28mar19-en.pdf>.

As you indicated, universal acceptance of domain names and email addresses is a necessary requirement for fostering competition, consumer choice, accessibility and innovation in the domain name industry. Based on the significance of achieving UA, ICANN org has made it a part of its strategic plan for 2021-2025. In addition, the ICANN Board has broadened the scope of the Board IDN Working Group to include universal acceptance. This will provide the Board with more visibility into the important work on UA.

ICANN org is supporting the Universal Acceptance Steering Group ([UASG](#)), a community-based initiative, financially and with staff resources to address the UA challenge. UASG is working in multiple areas for this purpose, including both technology development and outreach to relevant stakeholders. UASG has an active working group on Email Address Internationalization (EAI) and is planning to form a working group to enable UA support in technology. These groups will focus on identifying technological gaps and addressing them. We encourage the ME community members to get involved in these working groups and provide input on the issues which may be specific for right-to-left (RTL) scripts, as well as directly contribute towards addressing UA issues by providing appropriate guidance.

As suggested in the ME statement, UA readiness also requires collaboration with all stakeholders, including the private sector, technical and academic communities and governments. As noted, this requires both the identification of a repository tools which are UA ready and the promotion of their use to develop new systems or update the existing ones to make them UA-ready.

The technology-related UASG working groups are addressing the tools, as previously noted. These tools include a variety of documentation including quick guides, a blueprint for CIOs, programming language criteria and other useful reports. The UASG has also published a list of browsers that are UA-ready, an evaluation of certain websites for acceptance of EAI, and a widget to test your email to determine if it is EAI ready. An inventory of this documentation is available at <https://uasg.tech/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/UASG-000-Inventory-of-Material.pdf>.

Local outreach for promoting readiness requires the community to contribute. Therefore, we encourage the ME community to help in reaching out to the relevant stakeholders in the ME region for using UA-ready tools to develop or update their systems. UASG is keen to collaborate with such local initiatives to achieve common goals. In fact, the UASG has established an Ambassadors' Program to support local outreach – a list of current UA Ambassadors is available [here](#).

Measuring the status of UA readiness is necessary to guide the UA related work and to chart its progress. Therefore, the UASG has also started a working group to focus on measuring UA-readiness. The ME community has already been active in identifying and contributing testing criteria for the Arabic script. We look forward to its further involvement in, and continued contribution to, the community-based UASG effort.

Identifying and promoting nationally and regionally successful models for UA-readiness is a good proposal as it inspires others to follow suit. The recent [Rajmail](#) case study by UASG is a relevant example. UASG intends to continue promoting such case studies. In addition, UASG has a dedicated working group which is working towards creating awareness of the UA issue among relevant stakeholders, as well as conduct market analyses. The ME statement is being considered by UASG in its planning process.

UASG is now finalizing an overall action plan for next fiscal year (FY20) and will be sharing it with the UA community for feedback. We encourage the ME community to also review the plan and provide feedback on the various aspects of the plan generally and specifically in the context of points raised in the ME Statement on UA, to ensure it addresses the aspects the ME community considers important.

The ME community, through its work on Root Zone Label Generation Rules for Arabic script, has already made significant contributions in the area of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). ICANN org will also coordinate with the ME community on the additional points raised in the context of IDNs, including the development of Reference Second-Level Label Generation Rules and the issues of script mixing and homoglyphic labels to address them.

There is more to which the ME community could contribute. For example, we encourage you to ensure that your systems – as well as your vendors – are UA-ready now or in the near future.

We thank the ME Space for the comprehensive analysis leading to the input provided through the Statement on UA and encourage the ME community to more actively engage within the UASG working groups to contribute towards resolving these UA issues. For this purpose, we invite the ME community members to join the [UA discussion list](#). Ajay Data (ajay@data.in), UASG chair, also welcomes the ME Space for a conversation on engaging directly with UASG efforts.

We look forward to working with ME Space and community to address the UA challenges.

Sincerely,



Cyrus K. Namazi
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Global Domains Division