



24 October 2008

Dear ,

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is the international not-for-profit organisation which coordinates the technical policies and associated databases by which 250,000 private and public networks operate as one global, interoperable Internet. To reach another person on the Internet you have to type an address into your computer - a name or a number. That address has to be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN coordinates these unique identifiers across the world. Without that coordination there would not be one global Internet.

I wrote to you recently about the introduction of Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs) at the top level of the domain name system and at that time I advised that I would be writing to you again in the near future regarding the introduction of new generic top level domains (gTLDs).

Increasing competition and choice in the gTLD marketplace has been a key public policy goal of ICANN since it was founded 10 years ago as an international not-for-profit, multi-stakeholder organization. ICANN's mandate specifically calls for it to maintain and build on processes that will ensure competition and consumer interests, without compromising the security and stability of the Internet. This includes the consideration and implementation of new gTLDs.

This is further reflected in two of ICANN's core values contained in its Bylaws:

5. *Where feasible and appropriate, depending on market mechanisms, to promote and sustain a competitive environment.*
6. *Introducing and promoting competition in the registration of domain names where practicable and beneficial in the public interest.*

At the time ICANN was founded, there were eight gTLDs (.com, .net, .org, .mil, .gov, .edu, .int and .arpa) and over time an additional 13 gTLDs have been added to the domain name system, such as .biz, .info and .travel.



With the Internet growing at a phenomenal rate, increasing consumer choice, diversity and competition in the domain name system is seen as a necessary feature of the Internet going forward. As I outlined in my previous correspondence to you, IDNs at the top level of the domain name system will offer many potential new opportunities and benefits for Internet users of all languages around the world by allowing them to establish and use domains in their native languages and alphabets.

The decision to allow new gTLDs in basic Latin alphabet (or script) and other character sets, such as Arabic and Chinese (to list just two examples) was the result of a detailed and lengthy policy development process involving many representatives of the global Internet community, including governments, civil society, the technical community involved ensuring the integrity of the Internet, and business.

ICANN's policies are developed through bottom-up consensus based processes and in this instance the policy was developed by one of ICANN's policy making bodies, the Generic Names Supporting Organisation (GNSO) in accordance with Annex A: GNSO Policy Development Process <http://www.icann.org/en/general/bylaws.htm#AnnexA> of the ICANN bylaws. Four key questions were considered during this process: whether to introduce new top level domains; the selection criteria which included consideration of application fees, technical and string criteria; allocation methods; and policies for contractual conditions. This process took approximately 18 months and in October 2007, the GNSO presented a Final Report to the ICANN Board recommending the introduction of new gTLDs and outlining a number of principles, recommendations and implementation guidelines. The Final Report is available in two parts, A and B, and can be found at: <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/new-gtlds/pdp-dec05-fr-parta-08aug07.htm> and <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/new-gtlds/pdp-dec05-fr-partb-01aug07.htm>.

The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) of ICANN (see www.gac.icann.org) which considers and provides advice on the activities of ICANN as they relate to concerns of governments, contributed to this process through the *GAC Principles Regarding New gTLDs* http://gac.icann.org/web/home/gTLD_principles.pdf (GAC Principles). The principles identified a set of general public policy principles related to the introduction, delegation and operation of new gTLDs.

Following careful consideration of the GNSO Final Report, the ICANN Board accepted the recommendations of the Final Report and asked staff to commence work on developing an implementation plan. A major output from this planning is an Applicant Guidebook which provides information to potential applicants about the process for obtaining a TLD and how applications will be evaluated. The Applicant Guidebook contains six modules: an introduction to the gTLD application process; evaluation procedures; dispute resolution; string contention; transition to delegation and terms and conditions. Staff has worked closely with the ICANN community during the development of the Applicant Guidebook and other supporting documentation to ensure that it reflects the recommendations and the intent of the work undertaken by the GNSO. This work has included public workshops and consultations during ICANN meetings.



Staff has also consulted with the Governmental Advisory Committee about concerns that some of the elements of the GAC Principles had not been addressed in the GNSO Final Report. I have recently written to the Chairman of the GAC about these issues and I anticipate further discussion on these matters, which primarily relate to the consideration of geographic names, during ICANN's forthcoming meeting in Cairo from 2 to 7 November 2008. A copy of the correspondence is available at: <http://www.icann.org/correspondence/twomey-to-karklins-02oct08.pdf>.

The Applicant Guidebook has recently been published on ICANN's website at: <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtld-draft-rfp-24oct08-en.pdf> for a 45 day comment period and will shortly be available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish. Further information about the New gTLD process is available at: <http://www.icann.org/>.

In addition, a number of papers that serve as explanatory memoranda about elements of the Applicant Guidebook have also been published, including:

- Resolving string contention – a complete lifecycle with proposed efficient methods for string contention resolution
- Proposed process for Geographic Name applications
- Update to DNS Stability Paper – additional Technical Criteria Requirements
- Protection of Rights of Others and New gTLDs

These documents are available at:
<http://www.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-2-21oct08-en.htm>.

I anticipate that there will be considerable discussion about the Applicant Guidebook and the implementation of new gTLDs more generally, at ICANN's Cairo meeting to be conducted from 2 to 7 November. A copy of the agenda is available at <http://cai.icann.org/cai/schedule>.

I understand the Governmental Advisory Committee will be considering the Applicant Guidebook as part of their discussion of the implementation of new gTLDs during ICANN's Cairo meeting. While I encourage participation in the GAC discussion, this does not preclude the submission of individual comments on the Applicant Guidebook.

If you have any questions or you would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Donna Austin, Manager, Governmental Relations via email donna.austin@icann.org.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Twomey".

Paul Twomey
CEO & President

cc: