FOR RELEASE: Immediate

MEDIA CONTACTS: Brad White – Director of Media Affairs
Washington, DC USA
Ph: +1 310.301.3884
brad.white@icann.org

Michele Jourdan – Communications Department
Los Angeles, CA USA
Ph. +1 310.301.5831
michele.jourdan@icann.org

ICANN Gives Final Approval for Four Countries to Use Non-Latin Languages in Internet Address Names

Egypt, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, UAE clear final hurdle

Washington, DC… April 22, 2010… The ICANN Board of Directors has approved the last application step for four countries to use their national language scripts in the last portion of Internet address names.

Egypt, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates received approval to use their non-Latin language scripts in the top-level domain (TLD) part of an Internet address name. The top-level domain follows the dot, such as dot-com or dot-org.

"This decision means that, for the first time, we will see non-Latin characters, specifically Arabic and Cyrillic, in an entire Internet address name," said Rod Beckstrom, President and Chief Executive Officer of ICANN. "This will open the door to the Internet to Arabic and Russian speakers who may have never been online."

The Board's action is part of ICANN's move to internationalize the Internet by facilitating the use of non-Latin characters in the top-level domain. Until recently, technical constraints meant that all domain names had to end in letters from the Latin alphabet (A through Z). After years of work by ICANN, a global system for the use of other scripts has been designed and tested. It was approved in October.

"Today is a milestone in the development of the Internet," said Tina Dam, Senior Director of the IDN program. "The Board's approval means these addresses should be available to users in the four countries very soon."

The internationalized domain name program is being rolled out in stages. IDNs will initially be allowed on a limited basis for individual country domain names (known as country code top-level domains or ccTLDs). These four countries can now use non-Latin scripts for dot-eg (Egypt), dot-ru (Russia), dot-sa (Saudi Arabia) or dot-ae (U.A.E.). Eventually, IDNs will be allowed in the TLD portion of all Internet address names.

This is the first time any country has completed the entire application process under ICANN's Fast Track IDN ccTLD program.

The Board also passed a measure that is expected to expedite the appearance of Chinese characters in top-level domains as part of the IDN ccTLD Fast Track. To read more about that, go here: http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-22apr10-en.htm#synchronized.

To read today's Board resolution on IDN top-level domains for Egypt, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, go here: http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-22apr10-en.htm#idn-cctlds
.

To read more about the IDN ccTLD Fast Track, go here: http://www.icann.org/en/topics/idn/fast-track.

<div align="center">###</div>

About ICANN:

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 we wouldn't have one global Internet. ICANN was formed in 1998. It is a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with participants from all over the world dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable. It promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet's unique identifiers. ICANN doesn't control content on the Internet. It cannot stop spam and it doesn't deal with access to the Internet. But through its coordination role of the Internet's naming system, it does have an important impact on the expansion and evolution of the Internet. **For more information please visit: www.icann.org.**