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AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ALAC Statement on the Report: Supporting the Domain Name Industry in Underserved Regions

Introduction

Tijani Ben Jemaa, ALAC member from the African Regional At-Large Organization (AFRALO) and ALAC Leadership Team (ALT) member and Alan Greenberg, ALAC member from the North American Regional At-Large Organization (NARALO) and the ALAC Liaison to the GNSO composed an initial draft of this Statement after discussion of the topic within At-Large and on the Mailing Lists.

On 18 July 2014, this Statement was posted on the At-Large Report: Supporting the Domain Name Industry in Underserved Regions Workspace.

On that same day, Olivier Crépin-Leblond, Chair of the ALAC, requested ICANN Policy Staff in support of the ALAC to send a Call for Comments on the Recommendations to all At-Large members via the ALAC-Announce Mailing List.

On 23 July 2014, a version incorporating the comments received was posted on the aforementioned workspace and the Chair requested that Staff open an ALAC ratification vote on the proposed Statement on 23 July 2014 and close on 30 July 2014.

The Chair then requested that the Statement, referenced AL-ALAC-ST-0714-02-00-EN, be transmitted to the Public Comment process, copying the ICANN Staff member responsible for this Public Comment topic, with a note that the Statement was pending ALAC ratification.

On 31 July 2014, Staff confirmed that the online vote resulted in the ALAC endorsing the Statement with 12 votes in favor, 1 vote against, and 0 abstention. You may review the result independently under: https://www.bigpulse.com/pollresults?code=4131Isv99TeRcWqgTBzE7wH2.

Summary

1. The ALAC strongly supports the concept of supporting the DNI in underserved regions but notes that simply increasing the DNI without corresponding increases in demand will not be helpful.
2. The evolution of DNI programs should adhere to the following principles: 1) While increasing DNI penetration, the standards of suppliers should not be lowered; 2) education at all levels is key; 3) the processes to become a registrar should be clarified and simplified with training and support; 4) the demands placed on registrars should be reasonable based on local cost-of-living and related financial constraints; 5) the second new gTLD round should give preference to applicants from developing economies and undertake an outreach program to ensure a better understanding; and 6) technical and legal supports should be provided to new gTLD applicants in underserved regions.

ALAC Statement on the Report: Supporting the Domain Name Industry in Underserved Regions

The ALAC strongly supports the concept of supporting the domain name industry (DNI) in underserved regions.

As many of those who have comments have pointed out, it is not simply a matter of having more registrars. The ecosystem surrounding them must be considered as well. Simply increasing the DNI without corresponding increases in demand will not be helpful.

As the DNI programs evolve, the following principles should be adhered to:
1. Registrant and user rights and expectations must not be lowered in order to increase DNI penetration – we need more suppliers, not suppliers with lower standards;
2. Education at all levels is a key to increasing demand and local suppliers;
3. The processes to become a registrar should be clarified and to the extent possible simplified, and training should be available;
4. The demands placed on registrars should be reasonable based on local cost-of-living and related financial constraints. As a prime example, the insurance required for registrars is a real concern for the underserved regions (e.g. cost, convertibility of the local currency). A solution for this issue should be found to foster the establishment of young registrars in those regions.
5. Given the poor representation of developing economies in the first new gTLD round, the second round should give preference, if not exclusivity, to applicants from developing economies. In line with the concept behind the failed JAS program, fees and requirements must be aligned with the realities of developing economies, while not sacrificing Internet stability and security. It is critical that an outreach program must be undertaken to ensure a better understanding of the program, its benefits (e.g. economic, cultural, linguistic, etc.) and all the requirements for an application.
6. Technical and Legal Support is needed by underserved region applicants for a new gTLD. A program for such support should be developed.