

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



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Date : 2nd June 2014

Mr. Fadi Chehadé
President & CEO
ICANN
Email: fadi.chehade@icann.org

Subject: Delay on Dot Africa accreditation

Dear Mr. Chehadé,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the support and consideration through various initiatives and projects aimed at increasing Africa's contribution to ICANN. In particular, we appreciate the professional consideration towards the African Union Commission' (AUC's) sponsored application for Africa's geographic top-level domain, DotAfrica (.Africa).

As you are certainly aware, the DotAfrica gTLD is eagerly awaited by not only African governments and the Internet community, but also African citizens and global Internet users, businesses, civil society and many other stakeholders. DotAfrica is an extremely important initiative for Africa's participation and contribution to the Internet economy and to the broader Internet governance ecosystem. It has been backed up by many decisions adopted by the highest African Union organs including the Heads of States Summit that authorized the AUC to be the sponsoring organisation for DotAfrica. In fulfilling this mandate, the AUC appointed and endorsed the ZA Central Registry (ZACR) to apply for, launch and manage the DotAfrica (.Africa) TLD.

ZACR has complied with, met and exceeded all the stringent rules governing the application process for geographic applications in accordance with the new gTLDs Applicant Guidebook. In addition, the ZACR DotAfrica application passed all the necessary evaluations, reviews and procedures despite various challenges unique to our region. The ZACR application also passed initial evaluation in 2013, and in March 2014 ZACR signed a legally binding and enforceable contract with ICANN. The AUC sponsored ZACR application has clearly met all the criteria of the applicant guidebook; it is the only applicant for the string to have done so.

It is therefore with great concern that we are faced with yet another delay in delegating this important regional TLD due to the recent Independent Review Panel (IRP) instructions stopping ICANN from processing the DotAfrica application until it has ruled on the complaint filed by DotConnectAfrica (DCA).

As you can understand, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the AUC to explain to not only its member states but also other African stakeholders, why the African geographic TLD application has become so challenging for ICANN to expedite despite the various statements made towards the need to support developing regions. The African continent is already significantly marginalised within ICANN processes, it is therefore very important that this process is not delayed any further.

While this additional delay is very unfortunate, we acknowledge that ICANN must follow its own bylaws and accountability related procedures. We are however, deeply concerned that there is no definite date provided for the final IRP decision. We are also extremely concerned that with the suspension of any further activities in preparation for the technical delegation, this AUC sponsored application may encounter further delays once the IRP decision is made therefore providing opportunities for the launch of additional challenges aimed at delaying the technical delegation and launch of this important initiative.

At this very critical and sensitive stage, we are therefore urging you to ensure that as soon as the IRP decision is communicated there will be no further delays in implementing the technical delegation to enable ZACR to finally launch this long awaited DotAfrica TLD.

We therefore request that your team exercise utmost flexibility with pre delegation procedures required of ZACR to ensure that we are all ready for prompt delegation and launch.

Please accept, Mr. President & CEO, the expression of my highest consideration.


Dr. Elham M.A. IBRAHIM (Mrs)
Commissioner
Infrastructure and Energy



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