FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ICANN's Durban Meeting Kicks Off with Signing of New Registrar and Registry Agreements

Durban, South Africa… The first group of Internet Registries and Registrars has signed new agreements with ICANN, bringing new generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) into the home stretch of going live online.

"This is a huge accomplishment," said Fadi Chehadé, ICANN President and CEO. "We can see the last mile before the first new TLD is activated in the Internet's root."

Chehadé made the comments during a ceremonial signing at the opening session of ICANN's 47th Public Meeting in Durban, South Africa.

Three companies signed the Registry Agreement (RA) while five others signed the Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA), including Registrars from Senegal, Australia, France and the U.S.

Registries operate Top-Level Domains. Registrars are the entities through which domain names are registered.

The three registries applied for Top-Level Domain Names using language characters in Arabic, Chinese and Cyrillic.

During his remarks, Chehadé also acknowledged Nelson Mandela, the renowned former South African leader who is now hospitalized. Chehadé said Mandela's philosophies should act as guiding principles in the Internet ecosystem.

"We must realize we are inherently interdependent and thus must learn to be conciliatory and Africa defines that, as does Madiba [Mandela's clan name]," said Chehadé. "We need to maintain that Madiba spirit."

Dr. Elham Ibrahim, the African Union's Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy told the attendees, "The Internet is one of the greatest public gifts of the 20th century."

"African domain names will bring financial, economic and sociocultural benefits to Africa," said Ibrahim.

In referring to ICANN during a video address, Dr. Hamadoun Touré, the Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union, said there needs to be a "goal of working together by cultivating a relationship based on collaboration and cooperation."

"In a fast moving, rapidly evolving environment there are not permanent or even long term solutions," said Touré. "What works today will not necessarily work tomorrow. We need open on-going dialogue."

ICANN's Durban meeting will continue through Thursday, July 18.

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To download high-resolution photos from the ICANN's opening session, go here: http://www.flickr.com/photos/icann/sets/72157634649384908

To read more about Registry agreement, the initial group of signatories and the Top-Level Domains involved, go here: http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/announcements-and-media/announcement-15jul13-en

To read a blog posting about the agreements from the President of the Generic Domains Division, go here: http://blog.icann.org/2013/07/2013-raa-and-rya-signings-kick-off-icann-47-in-durban/

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About ICANN: *ICANN's mission is to ensure a stable, secure and unified global 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 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.***