

2 June 2026

Mr. Cosmas Zavazava  
Director - BDT  
International Telecommunication Union  
Place des Nations  
1211 Geneva 20  
Switzerland

Dear Mr. Zavazava,

It was a pleasure connecting with you at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona earlier this year. Further to our conversation on deepening our collaboration, I am writing to formally express the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers' (ICANN) interest in establishing a strategic partnership with the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT).

We have a long-standing relationship with the ITU and have supported its commitment to fostering international cooperation among its members to promote global connectivity, drive investment, and bridge the digital divide, including through the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition. This multistakeholder approach has helped advance digital technological development and aligns with ICANN's mission.

ICANN supports a global, Interoperable Internet; the foundation of the global digital economy. We are committed to ensuring the Internet is truly multilingual through the implementation of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and the Universal Acceptance (UA) of all valid domain names and email addresses, including those in local languages and scripts. This commitment aligns with ITU's 2025 WTDC Baku Declaration, including its support for advancing universal and meaningful connectivity including on multilingual telecommunication/ICT infrastructure, devices, services, and applications. I look forward to offering ICANN's technical expertise in support of the ITU-D's initiatives to advance meaningful connectivity.

Enclosed with this letter is a Concept Note outlining a proposed range of activities for cooperation between ICANN and the BDT. I look forward to continuing our partnership and to bringing our teams together to discuss these opportunities further. On our side, please contact Janis Karlins, Head of Government and IGO Engagement.

Respectfully,



Kurt Erik Lindqvist  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

cc: Jamie Hedlund  
Senior Vice President of Global Government Engagement and Contractual Compliance

cc: Theresa Swinehart  
Senior Vice President of Global Domains and Strategy

cc: Janis Karklins  
Head of Government Engagement

## Concept Note

### Promoting Multilingualism of the Internet in Collaboration with the ITU

#### 1. Background

The ability to use one's own language online, and thus accessibility, is vital for the development of a knowledge-based society. It is a key principle in the United Nations' [Geneva Summit for the World Summit on Information Society \(WSIS\)](#) in 2003, leading to commitments in the [Tunis agenda](#) in 2005 to advance multilingualization of the Internet. The Tunis agenda identified the need to advance the introduction of multilingualism in domain names, and e-mail addresses. By implementing programmes that allow for the use of domain names in different languages and writing systems on the Internet, called Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), we can enable broader participation in the information society. It also strengthens cooperation for the further development of technical standards and fosters their global deployment. UNESCO has also [noted](#) the importance of alleviating language barriers to promote human interaction on the Internet. The [WSIS+10 Outcome Document](#) further urged stakeholders to work together on multilingualization of ICTs, including email and IDNs, to ensure online participation in users' native languages and scripts.

#### 2. Introduction

The [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#) (ICANN) and its community have developed and implemented policies and procedures to allow for IDNs since 2003. Following further work, more than 150 top-level domains (TLDs) in 37 languages in 23 scripts are now available for global use. The efforts now allow for domain names like [https://ยูเอชแอล.ไทย](#) (Thai) and email addresses like [めーるてすと@どこでもつかえる.みんな](#) (Japanese) to be used. Despite this progress, Universal Acceptance (UA) of domain names and email addresses by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems remains a challenge. To ensure multilingual access and communication online, it is essential for users to be able to use all domain names and email addresses seamlessly across relevant software and applications. Studies supported by ICANN show that about 14% of popular [national or global websites](#) (out of 2000 tested in 2025) and merely 29.2% [email servers](#) from 31.4 million deployed under generic top-level domains (tested in April 2026), are configured to accept email addresses in local languages and writing systems. These figures show slight improvements over the past years but indicate that much more work needs to be done to address UA. ICANN continues to work with the community and organizations to advance the work on IDNs and multilingual Internet, including active collaboration with UNESCO and contribution to the Coalition for Digital Africa.

#### 3. Calls for Collaboration

Recent resolutions at the ITU and the UN highlight the goals for multistakeholder collaboration to promote multilingualism of the Internet.

- [WTDC Resolution 82 \(Rev., Kigali, 2022\)](#), “Preserving and promoting multilingualism on the Internet for an inclusive information society,” invites member states to promote universal acceptance of internationalized domain names (IDNs) and to collaborate and coordinate in enabling their usage on the Internet. It also urges all stakeholders to ensure the development and deployment of IDNs in all possible language scripts using their specific character sets.
- [ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 133 \(Rev., Bucharest, 2022\)](#), “Role of administrations of Member States in the management of internationalized (multilingual) domain names,” underscores the need to promote the use of IDNs to overcome linguistic barriers and increase the accessibility of the Internet. For this purpose, ICANN invites ITU member states to consider how to further promote the adoption of universal acceptance with respect to IDNs, and to collaborate and coordinate with relevant organizations and stakeholders in enabling the use of IDNs online. The resolution further calls for promoting capacity building, information-sharing and the exchange of best practices among all stakeholders in the deployment and implementation of IDNs.
- [ITU WTSA Resolution 48 \(Rev., New Delhi, 2024\)](#) on Internationalized (multilingual) Domain Names reiterated that the adoption of IDNs will promote multilingualism on the Internet and support connectivity in local languages and scripts for much of the world. It also notes that while significant progress in the technical development and availability of IDNs in the Domain Name System (DNS) has been made, universal acceptance remains the primary challenge.
- The [Global Digital Compact](#) notes as a principle that accessible and affordable data and digital technologies are essential to enable every person to participate fully in the digital world, and that cooperation will promote digital accessibility for all. It also asks to develop and strengthen indicators and metrics for universal and affordable connectivity, building on existing work, and integrate these into international, regional and national development strategies.
- The [WSIS+20 Outcome Document](#) recognises “the vital importance of multilingualism to reflect the linguistic, cultural and historical diversity of all nations” and “the work that has been done since the World Summit to extend the multilingual nature of the Internet, including the introduction of internationalized domain names and progress towards universal acceptance”. The Outcome Document further “urge all stakeholders to ensure that the Internet and digital services become fully accessible and affordable to all, including Indigenous Peoples and speakers of minority languages.

#### 4. Objectives

While the availability of domain names and email addresses in local languages and scripts is a milestone in enabling broader linguistic diversity online, billions of people cannot seamlessly use domain names or email addresses in their preferred languages and scripts due to technological limitations. Universal Acceptance (UA) is a fundamental technical requirement for a truly multilingual and digitally inclusive Internet. UA ensures that all valid domain names and email addresses, including those in local languages and scripts, can be used by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. By securing this important technical ability, developers, providers or managers of websites, applications, and systems enable users globally to experience the full social and economic power of the Internet. ICANN and its community have been striving to raise awareness of IDNs and associated UA challenges and also contributing toward building capacity to address these UA challenges. Exploring the various indicators that can assess progress in the adoption of UA and the implementation of IDNs would serve as an important benchmark in assessing universal connectivity. ICANN aims to collaborate with the ITU to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase global awareness of Universal Acceptance of all domain names and email addresses.
- Build capacity for IDN implementation and UA adoption.
- Investigate how to assess and share the progress on IDN implementation and UA adoption.

#### 5. Proposed Activities

Collaboration will be structured along several phased and mutually agreed activities. These may include collaboration with ICANN to create awareness and build capacity on UA for all domain names and email addresses globally and measure its progress. ICANN would like to discuss collaborating on the following activities and identify any additional mechanisms.

- Promote holding the annual [UA Day events](#), already organized by ICANN and its broader community since 2023.
- Create awareness among policy makers and the private sector on how they can promote IDN implementation and UA adoption.
- Integrate [UA Curriculum](#) in technical programs in universities globally and ITU Academy.
- Determine additional channels to disseminate IDN-UA technical training to relevant stakeholders.
- Investigate how to assess and share the progress on IDN implementation and UA adoption.